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NEARBY

Metro calls tender to implement RWH

BENGALURU
The BMRCL has called a tender to implement rainwater harvesting (RWH) projects to ensure that the rain falling on metro's elevated concrete tracks is used to recharge the groundwater table. » Page 5

Polls: Congress announces three more names

BENGALURU
The Congress on Friday named Sunil Bose, E. Tukaram, and Raksha Ramaiah as its candidates for Chamarajanagar, Ballari, and Chickballapur Lok Sabha seats, respectively. » Page 6

PROPERTYPLUS » PAGE 9

Grand alliance announces seat-sharing deal in Bihar

According to the agreement, RJD will contest 26 seats, and the Congress nine in the State that has 40 Lok Sabha constituencies; five seats have been allocated among the CPI(ML), CPI and CPI(M)

Amarnath Tewary
PATNA

A day after the last date for filing nomination papers for the first phase of Lok Sabha election scheduled on April 19, the Rashtriya Janata Dal- (RJD) and Congress-led *mahagathbandhan* (grand alliance) in Bihar announced their seat-sharing agreement on Friday.

According to the agreement, the RJD will contest 26 seats and the Congress nine, while five seats have been allocated among the three Left parties – the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Communist Party of India (Marxist).

The announcement was jointly made by the parties at the State headquarters of the RJD here.

Battle-ready: The leaders of the grand alliance join hands after releasing the candidates list in Patna on Friday. ANI

While the RJD will contest Purnia, Aurangabad, Gaya, Jamui, Nawada, Saran, Patliputra, Buxar, Ujjiyarpur, Jehanabad, Darbhanga, Banka, Araria, Munger, Sitamarhi, Jhanjharpur, Madhubani, Siwan, Seohar, Vaishali, Hajipur, Supaul, Valmikinagar, East Champaran, Madhepura, and Gopalganj, the Congress will fight in Kishanganj, Katihar, Samastipur, Patna Sahib, Sasaram, West Champaran, Muzaffarpur, Bhagalpur, and Maharajganj.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha election too, the Congress had contested nine seats winning the lone Kishanganj seat.

The BJP-led NDA had won the remaining 39 seats in the State.

Among the Left parties, the CPI (ML) is to contest three seats – Bhojpur (Ara), Nalanda and Karakat. While the CPI will contest the Begusarai seat, for which it has already announced Awadhesh Rai as the candidate, the CPI(M) will contest the Khagaria seat.

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav, who is also the Leader of the Opposition in the State Assembly, was conspicuous by his absence during the announcement. State Congress chief Akhilesh Prasad Singh, though, was present.

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Congress accuses BJP of unleashing 'tax terrorism'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Congress leaders Jairam Ramesh, Ajay Maken and Pawan Khera at a press conference in New Delhi on Friday. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

Accusing the Union government of resorting to "tax terrorism" against the principal Opposition party to deny a level playing field in the Lok Sabha election, the Congress on Friday said the Income Tax (I-T) department has made a fresh demand of ₹1,823.08 crore from the party.

Addressing a press conference along with general secretary (communications) Jairam Ramesh, Congress treasurer Ajay Maken said an analysis of the donations received by the BJP – posted on the Election Commission (EC) website – reveals "serious violations" that should attract a penalty of ₹4,600 crore.

The party said it arrived at this figure of ₹4,600 crore by using the same rate of penalty and interest that the I-T department used to penalise it for a cash deposit of ₹14 lakh by its MPs and MLAs in 2019.

Mr. Maken said political parties have to fill up a proforma of Form 24A, in which two basic and important pieces of information have to be furnished – the names and addresses of their donors. However, there were over 1,400 entries of donors that didn't have an address, and these totalled a donation of over ₹42 crore.

"I will soon file a public interest litigation (PIL) petition to recover ₹4,600 crore from the BJP for its violations in the past seven years," he said, adding, "We have analysed all the submissions of the BJP to the Election Commission (EC). The party has faltered every year."

Party general secretary (organisation) K.C. Venugopal asked the State and District units of the Congress to organise massive protests across the country on Saturday against "the blatant murder of democracy".

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'Power drunk' Siddaramaiah needs to be humbled: Gowda

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

One of the bitter rivalries in Karnataka politics has resurfaced ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, with former Prime Minister and Janata Dal (Secular) supremo H.D. Deve Gowda saying on Friday that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah should suffer "garvabhanga" (broken pride) with a victory of alliance partners in Mysuru and Chamarajanagar seats.

Mr. Gowda was speaking at the coordination meeting of Bharatiya Janata Party and JD(S) leaders here on Friday.

"The Chief Minister is filled with the arrogance of power. He asked where is JD(S) . This Deve Gowda, even at the age of 91, has the power to show him where JD(S) is and humble him," he said. He also alleged that the Congress had "sabotaged" his election from Tumakuru in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections and that the Congress-led State government in Karnataka was "looting the State".

JD(S) supremo H.D. Deve Gowda at the BJP, JD(S) coordination meeting on Friday. K. MURALI KUMAR

Mr. Gowda's tirade against the Chief Minister comes a day after the latter called him a "liar", speaking at a public rally before D.K. Suresh, Congress candidate, filed his nomination papers from the Bengaluru Rural Lok Sabha seat on Thursday.

"Mr. Deve Gowda recently said he has a great equation with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and he would ensure the Mekedatu project would be implemented if NDA returns to power. Why not use his equation with the Prime Minister and get the project implemented now itself? Mr. Gowda has been telling only lies," the Chief Minister had said.

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At 36.4°C, city records hottest March in 5 years

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Bengaluru on Friday (March 29) recorded the hottest day of the year so far. Both Bengaluru city and Kempegowda International Airport stations recorded a maximum of 36.4°C which is the highest in the last five years for the city.

"Today Bengaluru city recorded 36.4°C which is the highest in the last five years, the fourth highest in the last 15 years and the third highest in the last 10 years," said A. Prasad, a scientist at the India Meteorological Department (IMD), Bengaluru. On Friday, HAL airport recorded a maximum of 35.5°C.

He said the city last recorded temperatures above 37°C in 2019 and 2017. The highest-ever temperature for March was 37.3°C, which was recorded in 1996. The minimum temperature on Friday in Bengaluru city and KIA were 23.6°C and 22°C. The minimum temperature at HAL airport was 21.6 °C.

Bengaluru last recorded temperatures above 37 ° Celsius in 2019 and 2017. FILE PHOTO

The IMD Bengaluru on Friday forecast the likelihood of dry weather over all the districts of Karnataka till April 4. With temperatures in some districts breaching the 40°C mark and many others crossing the 38°C, there will be no respite from the scorching sun for the next few days.

40.9° in Kalaburagi

According to the IMD, the highest maximum temperature of 40.9°C was recorded in Kalaburagi, and the lowest minimum temperature of 19.5°C was recorded in Chamarajanagar. The other districts that recorded high temperatures are Bagalkot 40.6°C, Koppal 39.6°C, Raichur 39.8°C, and Gadag 39.0°C.

The IMD said the maximum temperatures are likely to rise by two to three degrees Celsius at isolated places over interior Karnataka during the next three days.

Heat wave conditions

It has also issued a heat warning stating that heat wave conditions are likely to prevail at isolated places in Kalaburagi, Bagalkot, Bidar, Vijayapura, Yadgir, Raichur, and Koppal districts of north interior Karnataka during the next two days.

"There is no possibility of rain in the next few days. All across Karnataka, we will have dry weather conditions for the next week. We are not seeing any cloud formation, and we might have rainfall only in the second week of April. We will know the probability of rainfall, whether it will be normal, below normal or above normal, by the end of this month or April 1," Mr. Prasad said.

He added that if the average temperature in a district is more than 38°C then a heatwave warning or yellow alert is declared.

The districts of Kalaburgi, Vijayapura, Bagalkot, Raichur, Koppal, Gadag, Ballari and Tumakuru recorded more than 38°C at 8.30 a.m. on Friday. The maximum temperature in both Haveri and Davangere was 38.2°C.

Discussed 'peace formula' with India, says Ukraine Foreign Minister

Kallol Bhattacherjee
NEW DELHI

India and Ukraine on Friday discussed a 'peace formula' for the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, visiting Foreign Minister of Ukraine Dmytro Kuleba said at the conclusion of official exchanges.

Mr. Kuleba, who was on a two-day visit to India, met with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and described the Russian campaign against Ukraine as a "full-scale war", while arguing for energising India-Ukraine relations with new projects.

"In New Delhi, I had sincere and comprehensive talks with Mr. Jaishankar about Ukraine-India bilateral relations, the situation in our regions, and global security. We paid specific attention to the peace formula and next steps on the path of its implementation," Mr. Kuleba said, after the official interaction that was also attended by Secretary (West) Pavan Kapoor and J.P. Singh, Joint Secretary of the External Affairs Minister's Office, and others.

Common goal: External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar meets with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba on Friday. ANI

In comments to *The Hindu* on Thursday, Mr. Kuleba had urged India to play a "more proactive role" in the upcoming peace process in Switzerland.

"We have been looking forward to this visit. In recent months, we have had interactions at various levels. This has created a certain momentum in our bilateral relations. Your visit gives us an opportunity to understand the situation in your region," said Mr. Jaishankar in his opening remarks at the delegation-level meeting.

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Pressure cookers as 'gift to induce voters': Manufacturer comes under I-T scanner

Sharath S. Srivatsa
BENGALURU

Bengaluru Rural Lok Sabha constituency, where D.K. Suresh, sitting Congress MP, is up against BJP candidate Dr. C.N. Manjunath, seems to be under the scanner of the Income Tax Department.

Tax sleuths issued a notice to a leading home appliances manufacturer seeking details of its production and distribution of pressure cookers following allegation of distribution of pressure cookers in Bengaluru Rural constituency as election-related inducement.

The home appliances company had been searched by I-T officials in connection with a similar complaint during the Assembly elections in May 2023.

Illustration for representation only.

The latest action follows a complaint by the Janata Dal (Secular) to the Election Commission alleging distribution of four lakh pressure cookers in Bengaluru Rural constituency.

A source in the I-T Department told *The Hindu*, "We are inquiring into the complaint. We have summoned the manufacturer of pressure cookers. We are seeking information on how many cookers they have sold and where, including bulk sales." The source revealed that the manufacturer has seven warehouses in the constituency.

Complaint by HDK

Earlier, addressing mediapersons, former Chief Minister and Janata Dal (Secular) leader H.D. Kumaraswamy alleged that about 10 lakh pressure cookers bearing the photograph of a candidate were set to be distributed, of which 4 lakh had already been distributed.

The pressure cookers, he claimed, were being manufactured in Harohalli industrial area, which comes under Bengaluru Rural constituency.

Appealing to the Election Commission to intervene, Mr. Kumaraswamy claimed to have complained to election officers in the constituency, including the Deputy Commissioner, but the officials insisted that no such activity was taking place.

GETTY IMAGES

Carlos Sainz — the smooth operator with a hard edge

The 29-year-old returned from emergency appendix surgery to win the Australian GP, remaining the only driver outside Red Bull to triumph since 2022. Out of contract at the end of the season, the Spaniard's analytical approach and aggressive driving style are set to attract top suitors

Reuters
Associated Press

When Carlos Sainz was in hospital after having his appendix removed, the most natural thing for him – if he were the average human being – would have been to wallow in self-pity.

The emergency surgery meant he would miss the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix – in the cut-throat world of Formula One, you never give another driver an even break, and Sainz was being forced to do just that.

Significant displacement

This turn of events, moreover, had followed a more significant displacement: the Spaniard had learnt before the season that seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton would replace him at Ferrari in 2025.

Out of work at the end of the year and out of commission for at least one Grand Prix, Sainz watched British teenager Oliver Bearman step into his car in Jeddah and drive it to seventh place on an extraordinary F1 debut. Most people, confronted by an equivalent set of circumstances, would have sunk back into their beds in a gloomy, woe-is-me mood.

> The reason why athletes recover faster is because you can dedicate 24 hours per day for seven days to recovery. And that's exactly what I did

Sainz, however, got to work. "As soon as I got my appendix removed, I went on the internet and started talking with professionals and said, 'OK, what helps to speed up recovery?'," he told reporters.

"I started doing all the sort of things that you can do to speed up recovery, the wounds, the scar tissue, what you can help to be faster on that, talking to other athletes, talking to other doctors in Spain, internationally. And then I put together a plan with my team.

"The reason why athletes recover faster is because you can dedicate 24 hours per day for seven days to recovery. And that's exactly what I did."

Sainz had twice daily hour-long sessions in a hyperbaric chamber, breathing pure oxygen at higher pressure, and used an electromagnetic INDIBA machine for tissue repair. He programmed his time spent in bed, walking and eating "the kind of food that you have to recover."

Stunning recovery

Two weeks after surgery, Sainz was back in his Ferrari, ready for the Australian Grand Prix.

"Nine days ago, when I was about to catch the flight to come to Australia, I was still in bed. I could barely use my abdominal [muscles] to move. And I was like, this is not going to happen," he said. "But I took the flight, and suddenly when I landed in Australia, the feeling was a lot better.

"And every 24 hours, I was making a lot more progress than the first seven days, which is actually what all the doctors and professional people told me. Don't worry, because the second week, every day is going to improve a lot more than the first week."

Although he was improving, Sainz knew that driving a Formula 1 car – a physically punishing experience at the best of times – would be even more challenging after an appendectomy. So he consulted Williams driver Alex Albon, who had had his appendix removed in 2022.

"I feel like it's exactly what Alex told me," Sainz said. "With the g-force and everything, on the inside, it just feels like everything is moving more than normal and you need some confidence to brace the core and the body as you're used to doing, but you get used to it.

"There is no pain, nothing to worry about. It's just a weird feeling that you have to get used to. Especially on this circuit, we're pulling five to six Gs in some of the braking zones and corners."

If he felt stiff and tired by the end of the race at Albert Park, the result exceeded all expectations. Sainz handled the "weird feeling" to capitalise on a mechanical failure for three-time world champion Max Verstappen – the back of his Red Bull began spewing smoke, with fire following, forcing Verstappen's retirement – and win the Australian Grand Prix.

Resilience that runs deep

The Spaniard was the first driver since Austrian Gerhard Berger in 1997 to win his first race back from a medical absence – perhaps not surprising when you consider that resilience runs in the Sainz family. After all, his father, Carlos Sainz Sr., won the gruelling Dakar Rally for a fourth time earlier this year, becoming the oldest winner of the race at 61.

The younger Sainz, with his victory in Melbourne, remains the only driver outside Red Bull to triumph since 2022 – some feat for a man still without a seat for 2025. His last win came in Singapore last year, when he showcased his racecraft and lateral thinking. Leading the race on a track with few overtaking opportunities, he deliberately lapped slower than he might have done, keeping the pack within range and too close to make a strategic pit-stop work.

After a safety car came out, Sainz saw another way of getting the win without going faster. He slowed down and cleverly kept second-placed Lando Norris within DRS range, helping the Englishman prevent the hard-chasing George Russell and Hamilton from challenging for No. 1.

These two wins – Singapore 2023 and Melbourne 2024, in the midst of Red Bull dominance – prove that Sainz can make the most of the smallest opportunity. His ability to stay calm in the heat of battle, analytically plot a route to victory when a sliver of a chance opens up, and then execute the race without making an error has earned him the nickname 'Smooth Operator'.

> I am still without a job for next year. I don't race to prove to team principals my value. I race for myself. That's the mentality and approach I have and will continue to [have]

The calm, clinical approach is married to a scrappy, aggressive driving style. Unlike Verstappen and Charles Leclerc, he enjoys a less skittish car. "I prefer a car that understeers than a car that oversteers," he once said. "Why? because my driving is really aggressive. When I am out on track, I know everyone calls me 'Smooth Operator' but I can make a car rotate... I turn the car myself with the steering wheel and the pedals."

Underrated and respected

With just three career race wins, Sainz may not have the numbers some others on the grid have – but that is also a function of him rarely having cars that could contend for victory. Sainz does, however, have the respect of his peers and predecessors. Regarded as the most underrated driver in the sport, he is a man team principals will be keeping a close eye on. With vacancies, or potential vacancies, in top teams such as Mercedes and Red Bull for next season, Sainz should have attractive options to choose from. He is giving himself "enough time and enough information" to make a decision on "probably the most important three or four years of my career", but his focus for the moment is more immediate.

"I am still without a job for next year," Sainz said after his victory in Melbourne. "Everyone more or less knows what I'm capable of doing. I don't race to prove to team principals my value. I race for myself. That's the mentality and approach I have and will continue to."

If Ferrari's early promise holds, Sainz, who has already ended two Red Bull streaks, will back himself to pull off something truly breathtaking in his final season in red.

STACKING UP

ATP Men's Top 15

#	Player	Age	Points	Events
1	Novak Djokovic	36	9,725	18
2	Carlos Alcaraz	20	8,805	18
3	Jannik Sinner	22	8,310	20
4	Daniil Medvedev	28	7,765	19
5	Alexander Zverev	26	5,060	26
6	Andrey Rublev	26	4,970	24
7	Holger Rune	20	3,875	23
8	Casper Ruud	25	3,560	24
9	Hubert Hurkacz	27	3,370	24
10	Alex de Minaur	25	3,300	25
11	Stefanos Tsitsipas	25	3,255	25
12	Grigor Dimitrov	32	2,935	24
13	Taylor Fritz	26	2,935	25
14	Tommy Paul	26	2,430	27
15	Ugo Humbert	25	2,420	29

Top Indians ▶

Sumit Nagal
Rank 97 ▲ 4 spots

Ramkumar Ramanathan
Rank 410 ▼ 1 spot

WTA Women's Top 15

#	Player	Age	Points	Events
1	Iga Swiatek	22	10,715	19
2	Aryna Sabalenka	25	8,195	17
3	Coco Gauff	20	7,150	19
4	Elena Rybakina	24	5,848	19
5	Jessica Pegula	30	5,035	22
6	Ons Jabeur	29	4,118	23
7	Qinwen Zheng	21	4,050	21
8	Marketa Vondrousova	24	4,015	16
9	Maria Sakkari	28	3,825	24
10	Jelena Ostapenko	26	3,493	23
11	Daria Kasatkina	26	3,118	25
12	Karolina Muchova	27	3,060	12
13	Beatriz Haddad Maia	27	2,870	24
14	Jasmine Paolini	28	2,810	29
15	Liudmila Samsonova	25	2,605	24

Top Indians ▶

Ankita Raina
Rank 242 ▼ 17 spots

Sahaja Yamalapalli
Rank 309 ▲ 17 spots

English Premier League Standings

#	Team	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Arsenal	28	20	4	4	70	24	46	64
2	Liverpool	28	19	7	2	65	26	39	64
3	Man. City	28	19	6	3	63	28	35	63
4	Aston Villa	29	17	5	7	60	42	18	56
5	Tottenham	28	16	5	7	59	42	17	53
6	Man. United	28	15	2	11	39	39	0	47
7	West Ham	29	12	8	9	46	50	-4	44
8	Brighton	28	11	9	8	50	44	6	42
9	Wolves	28	12	5	11	42	44	-2	41
10	Newcastle	28	12	4	12	59	48	11	40
11	Chelsea	27	11	6	10	47	45	2	39
12	Fulham	29	11	5	13	43	44	-1	38
13	Bournemouth	28	9	8	11	41	52	-11	35
14	Crystal Palace	28	7	8	13	33	48	-15	29
15	Brentford	29	7	5	17	41	54	-13	26
16	Everton *	28	8	7	13	29	39	-10	25
17	Luton Town	29	5	7	17	42	60	-18	22
18	N. Forest *	29	6	7	16	35	51	-16	21
19	Burnley	29	4	5	20	29	63	-34	17
20	Sheffield	28	3	5	20	24	74	-50	14

* Everton deducted six points and Forest deducted four points following breaches of the PL's Profitability and Sustainability Rules

Italian Serie A Standings

#	Team	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Inter Milan	29	24	4	1	71	14	57	76
2	AC Milan	29	19	5	5	55	33	22	62
3	Juventus	29	17	8	4	44	23	21	59
4	Bologna	29	15	9	5	42	25	17	54
5	Roma	29	15	6	8	55	35	20	51
6	Atalanta	28	14	5	9	51	32	19	47
7	Napoli	29	12	9	8	44	33	11	45
8	Fiorentina	28	12	7	9	41	32	9	43
9	Lazio	29	13	4	12	36	33	3	43
10	Monza	29	11	9	9	32	36	-4	42
11	Torino	29	10	11	8	28	26	2	41
12	Genoa	29	8	10	11	31	36	-5	34
13	Lecce	29	6	10	13	26	45	-19	28
14	Udinese	29	4	15	10	28	44	-16	27
15	Verona	29	6	8	15	26	39	-13	26
16	Cagliari	29	6	8	15	29	50	-21	26
17	Empoli	29	6	7	16	22	43	-21	25
18	Frosinone	29	6	6	17	37	60	-23	24
19	Sassuolo	29	6	5	18	33	56	-23	23
20	Salernitana	29	2	8	19	23	59	-36	14

Spanish LaLiga Standings

#	Team	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Real Madrid	29	22	6	1	64	20	44	72
2	Barcelona	29	19	7	3	60	34	26	64
3	Girona	29	19	5	5	59	34	25	62
4	Athletic Bilbao	29	16	8	5	50	26	24	56
5	Atletico Madrid	29	17	4	8	54	34	20	55
6	Real Sociedad	29	12	10	7	42	31	11	46
7	Real Betis	29	10	12	7	34	33	1	42
8	Valencia	28	11	7	10	32	32	0	40
9	Villarreal	29	10	8	11	47	51	-4	38
10	Getafe	29	9	11	9	37	42	-5	38
11	Las Palmas	29	10	7	12	29	32	-3	37
12	Osasuna	29	10	6	13	33	43	-10	36
13	Alaves	29	8	8	13	26	35	-9	32
14	Real Mallorca	29	6	12	11	25	35	-10	30
15	Rayo Vallecano	29	6	11	12	25	38	-13	29
16	Sevilla	29	6	10	13	36	44	-8	28
17	Celta Vigo	29	6	9	14	32	44	-12	27
18	Cadiz	29	3	13	13	20	40	-20	22
19	Granada	28	2	8	18	30	58	-28	14
20	Almeria	29	1	10	18	28	57	-29	13

German Bundesliga Standings

#	Team	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Leverkusen	26	22	4	0	66	18	48	70
2	Bayern	26	19	3	4	78	31	47	60
3	Stuttgart	26	18	2	6	60	31	29	56
4	Dortmund	26	14	8	4	53	32	21	50
5	RB Leipzig	26	15	4	7	60	32	28	49
6	E. Frankfurt	26	10	10	6	42	35	7	40
7	FC Augsburg	26	9	8	9	43	42	1	35
8	Hoffenheim	26	9	6	11	44	50	-6	33
9	SC Freiburg	26	9	6	11	36	48	-12	33
10	Werder Bremen	26	8	6	12	35	41	-6	30
11	Heidenheim	26	7	8	11	35	44	-9	29
12	M'gladbach	26	6	10	10	46	50	-4	28
13	Union Berlin	26	8	4	14	25	42	-17	28
14	Wolfsburg	26	6	7	13	31	44	-13	25
15	Bochum	26	5	10	11	30	54	-24	25
16	Mainz	26	3	10	13	22	46	-24	19
17	Cologne	26	3	9	14	20	47	-27	18
18	Darmstadt	26	2	7	17	26	65	-39	13

Test Batting

#	Player	Rating	Career best
1	Kane Williamson	859	919
2	Joe Root	824	923
3	Babar Azam	768	882
3	Daryl Mitchell	768	804
5	Steve Smith	757	947
6	Rohit Sharma	751	813
7	Dimuth Karunaratne	740	783
7	Yashasvi Jaiswal	740	740
9	Virat Kohli	737	937
10	Harry Brook	735	773

Test Bowling

#	Player	Rating	Career best
1	R. Ashwin	870	904
2	Josh Hazlewood	847	864
2	Jasprit Bumrah	847	881
4	Kagiso Rabada	834	902
5	Pat Cummins	820	914
6	Nathan Lyon	801	801
7	Ravindra Jadeja	788	899
8	Prabath Jayasuriya	747	783
9	James Anderson	739	903
10	Shaheen Afridi	733	836

ODI Batting

#	Player	Rating	Career best
1	Babar Azam	824	898
2	Shubman Gill	801	847
3	Virat Kohli	768	909
4	Harry Tector	746	767
4	Rohit Sharma	746	882
6	Daryl Mitchell	728	750
7	David Warner	723	869
8	Pathum Nissanka	711	728
9	Dawid Malan	707	730
10	Rassie van der Dussen	701	796

ODI Bowling

#	Player	Rating	Career best
1	Keshav Maharaj	716	741
2	Josh Hazlewood	688	727
3	Adam Zampa	686	695
4	Mohammed Siraj	678	736
5	Jasprit Bumrah	665	838
6	Mohammad Nabi	656	657
7	Shaheen Afridi	650	688
8	Kuldeep Yadav	645	760
9	Trent Boult	643	775
10	Bernard Scholtz	642	642

T20I Batting

#	Player	Rating	Career best
1	Suryakumar Yadav	861	910
2	Philip Salt	802	802
3	Mohammad Rizwan	800	875
4	Babar Azam	764	896
5	Aiden Markram	755	796
6	Yashasvi Jaiswal	714	739
7	Rilee Rossouw	689	724
8	Finn Allen	686	723
9	Jos Buttler	680	687
10	Reeza Hendricks	660	674

T20I Bowling

#	Player	Rating	Career best
1	Adil Rashid	726	746
2	Wanindu Hasaranga	687	797
3	Akeal Hosein	664	683
4	Axar Patel	660	667
5	Maheesh Theekshana	659	684
5	Ravi Bishnoi	659	699
7	Josh Hazlewood	654	806
7	Tabraiz Shamsi	654	821
9	Mitchell Santner	645	724
9	Rashid Khan	645	816

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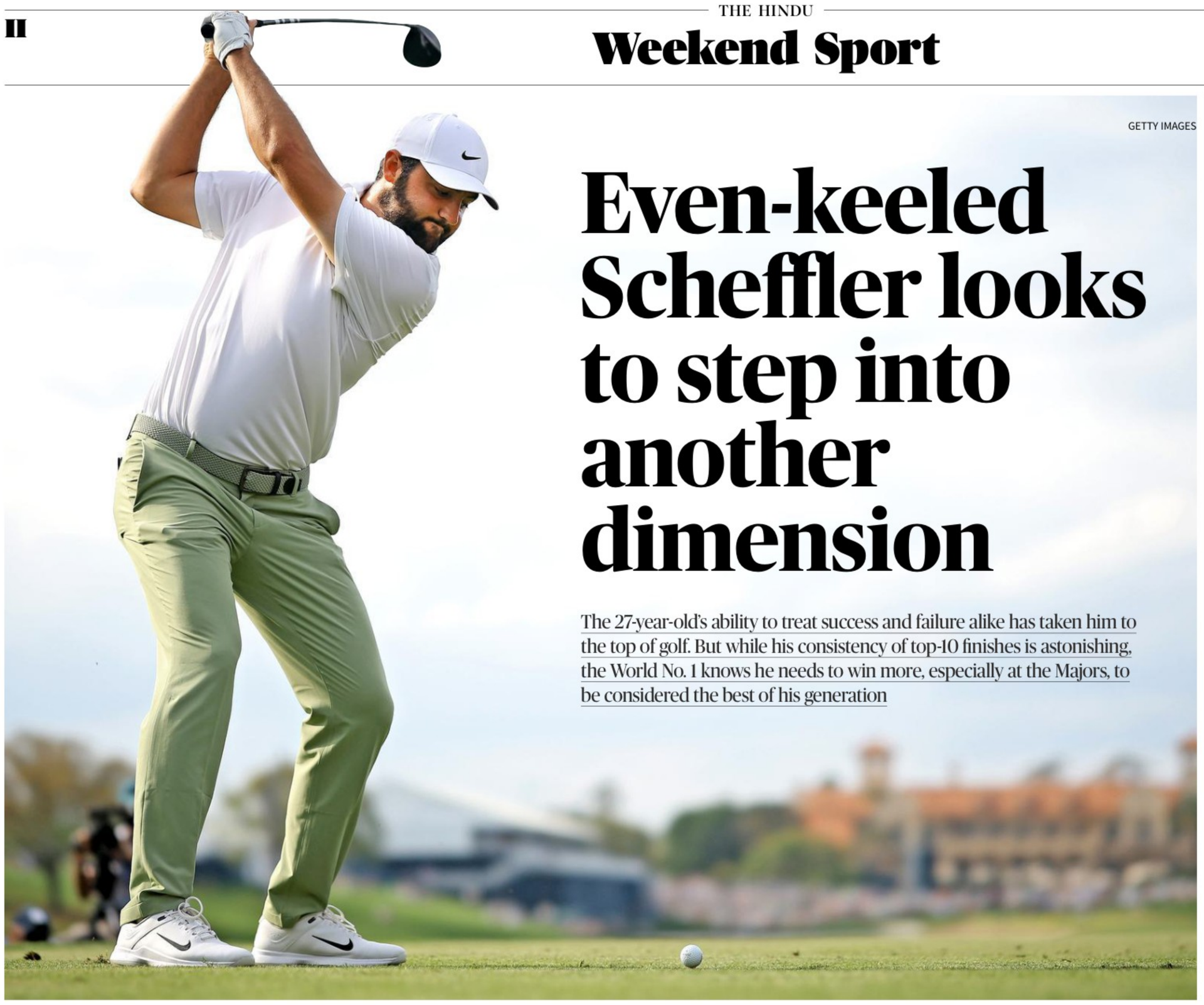

GETTY IMAGES

Even-keeled Scheffler looks to step into another dimension

The 27-year-old's ability to treat success and failure alike has taken him to the top of golf. But while his consistency of top-10 finishes is astonishing, the World No. 1 knows he needs to win more, especially at the Majors, to be considered the best of his generation

Associated Press
Agence France-Presse

The historic Masters Tournament, held every year in the first full week of April, effectively sets the schedule for the PGA Tour. The dates fall to April 11-14 this year – the first time since 2019 – meaning an extra tournament on the road to Augusta National.

As a result, the top players are having to make some adjustments – World No. 1 and 2022 Masters champion Scottie Scheffler is at the Houston Open, trying his hardest to win but also fine-tuning his game with an eye on slipping into the coveted green jacket again.

Steady Scottie

His title defence came apart last year, with the American conceding that he "just didn't have it". But it's a measure of Scheffler's consistency – an increasingly recurrent theme in his career – that he still finished in a tie for 10th, eight strokes behind winner Jon Rahm.

Indeed, it's Scheffler's quality of invariably being in contention that makes him so remarkable. Elite sport is played between the ears – and golf, because of the extreme levels of precision it demands in a changeable environment, is a severe mental test. Scheffler's ability to treat success and failure alike has allowed him to consistently deal with these emotional challenges.

Just weeks ago – right before he earned $8.5 million for winning two big trophies in a span of 10 days and erased any questions on whether he deserved to be ranked No. 1 – he spoke about how quickly he can forget the past, win or lose.

> I had this idea that I had to play perfect on Sundays, and that's not necessarily how golf is played. The most valuable thing is knowing what you feel like and being able to prepare for it

"I don't celebrate accomplishments that well. I don't feel like I dwell on failures that much either," Scheffler said. "If you ask my wife, she would say I need to celebrate more."

The celebration after he won the Arnold Palmer Invitational involved cheeseburgers in the clubhouse with his family, followed by a two-hour drive to the TPC Sawgrass. The day after Scheffler became the only player in 50 editions of The Players Championship to win back to back, he was texting his swing coach about their practice schedule.

The 6'3" American has a big game, but it's guided by a process-oriented approach.

"I try not to place too much emphasis on results, good or bad," he said. "I show up to try and perform my best and hopefully win. But when I stand on the tee on Thursday, I'm not thinking about the trophy ceremony at the end of the week. I'm just trying to be committed to the shot."

Leading the world

Scheffler's latest victory at the Players pushed him over $50 million for his PGA Tour earnings in just five years. He has been at No. 1 since last May, and his gap over everyone else is the largest since Dustin Johnson seven years ago. Barring injury, he has a chance to become the first player since Tiger Woods in 2009 to hold the No. 1 ranking for an entire calendar year.

Scheffler is playing great golf, measured as much by his elite ball-striking and alarming consistency as the results. He now has nine victories against the strongest fields – one of them a small field in the Bahamas – in the 25 months since he won his first PGA Tour title. Equally impressive is his 65% rate of finishing in the top 10.

Last year, he had the best statistical season since Woods, leading the tour in all the important categories from the tee to the green, along with scoring. He had the seventh-lowest adjusted scoring average (68.63) in PGA Tour history – the top six belong to Woods – and finished outside the top 10 only six times in 23 tournaments.

> It's not like I've been a bad putter my whole career. Golf is a hard game. ... The more free and loose I can play, especially on the greens, the better off I am

To stay emotionally stable, Scheffler doesn't spend much time on social media. He also takes precautions not to listen or read about himself.

"Let's say I remember all the good things. Then I walk around with a big head thinking, 'This is how great I am.' That's not good, either," Scheffler said before his most recent run. "If I read the bad stuff, that's all I'm going to remember. 'Scottie can't putt. He hadn't won in a year. Is he the best player in the world?' It's a losing game."

Mostly what keeps him grounded are the people around him. His mother has been a chief operating officer for law firms in New York and Dallas, and his father stayed at home with Scheffler and his three sisters.

His wife, Meredith, is pregnant with their first child, due around the end of April. She's the one who told Scheffler on Sunday morning of the 2022 Masters, when he woke up with tears and self-doubt, "Who are you to say that you are not ready?" He wound up winning his first Major.

The Woods comparisons

Golf is always looking for the heir to the throne, and so it's no surprise that Scheffler has drawn comparisons with Woods. But the 27-year-old has not let it get to his head, aware that Woods spent more than 13 years as No. 1, including a record 281 consecutive weeks.

"Anytime you can be compared to Tiger is really special," Scheffler said. "But I mean, the guy stands alone. I've got 14 more Majors and 70-some PGA Tour events to catch up. So I'm going to continue to plod along, try and stay as even-keeled as I can."

Scheffler also knows that while his consistency continues to draw admiration, he needs to win more, especially at the Majors. With the sport divided after the advent of LIV Golf, financed by the sovereign wealth fund of Saudi Arabia, only the four Majors see the full roster of great players, and it's at these iconic tournaments that Scheffler must prove his superiority.

To do that, he must ensure that his putting stays solid. Long known to struggle on the greens, Scheffler switched from a blade to a mallet putter recently. "I like not having to line the ball up," he said. "I line this putter up well in the middle of the face. It's very good visually."

But as important to Scheffler as the switch to a mallet style was a redressing of his mental game. "It's not like I've been a bad putter my whole career," he said. "I've just gone through a tough stretch. I'm still working on the same fundamentals. Golf is a hard game. ... The more free and loose I can play, especially on the greens, usually the better off I am."

Scheffler's newfound strength with the mallet putter may have his competitors nervous, but he will know that Augusta's unforgiving, undulating greens will be a fierce test. What he will also know, however, is that he has battled doubts and mastered them previously.

A second green jacket, which will double his Majors tally to two, will confirm his status as the current undisputed top dog in golf. But he will not be getting ahead of himself.

When he stands on the tee on April 11, the only thing he will be thinking about will be his first shot.

GAME THEORY

Top shot-stoppers in LaLiga

We take a look at how often goalkeepers in Spain's top flight have made saves and kept clean sheets so far this season.

Goalkeeper	Club	Games	Saves	Saves per game	Clean sheets	Clean sheet %
Unai Simon	Athletic Club	29	75	2.59	15	51.72
Alex Remiro	Real Sociedad	28	73	2.61	11	39.29
Stole Dimitrievski	Rayo Vallecano	29	90	3.10	10	34.48
Paulo Gazzaniga	Girona	29	90	3.10	10	34.48
Marc-Andre ter Stegen	Barcelona	19	49	2.58	10	52.63
Giorgi Mamardashvili	Valencia	28	81	2.89	9	32.14
Jan Oblak	Atletico Madrid	29	82	2.83	9	31.03
David Soria	Getafe	29	95	3.28	9	31.03
Sergio Herrera	Osasuna	25	65	2.60	8	32.00
Andriy Lunin	Real Madrid	17	36	2.12	8	47.06
Predrag Rajkovic	Mallorca	29	76	2.62	8	27.59
Rui Silva	Betis	20	61	3.05	8	40.00
Antonio Sivera	Alaves	29	79	2.72	7	24.14
Alvaro Valles	Las Palmas	29	86	2.97	7	24.14
Kepa Arrizabalaga	Real Madrid	12	26	2.17	6	50.00
Vicente Guaita	Celta Vigo	20	62	3.10	5	25.00
Jeremias Ledesma	Cadiz	26	86	3.31	5	19.23
Luis Maximiano	Almería	26	86	3.31	5	19.23
Filip Jorgensen	Villarreal	28	112	4.00	4	14.29
Orjan Nyland	Sevilla	15	43	2.87	3	20.00
Marko Dmitrovic	Sevilla	13	44	3.38	2	15.38
Inaki Pena	Barcelona	10	22	2.20	2	20.00
Augusto Batalla	Granada	10	39	3.90	1	10.00
Andre Ferreira	Granada	15	49	3.27	0	0.00
Ivan Villar	Celta Vigo	10	25	2.50	0	0.00

SOURCE: FBref.com | Minimum 10 games

Unai Simon

Alex Remiro

Stole Dimitrievski

Paulo Gazzaniga

Marc-Andre ter Stegen

PICTURE THIS

Yee-haw!

Tilden Hooper, riding Choke Cherry, competes in the bareback riding event during The American Rodeo in Arlington, Texas, recently.

The sport of rodeo has its roots in the working practices of cattle-herding in Spain and Mexico. It is now a competition with several events that test the speed and skill of cowboys and cowgirls.

The American Rodeo, accessible to both amateurs and professionals, has a prize pool exceeding $1 million and draws sizeable crowds.

Bareback riding is one of the events featured in rodeos; the others include breakaway roping, bull riding, steer wrestling and barrel racing.

In bareback riding, which has a sporting history dating back a century, competitors attempt to stay on a bucking horse for eight seconds without touching the horse with their free hand.

To hold on, bareback riders use a rigging, like a suitcase handle, attached to a strap that fastens around the horse's girth.

Modern rodeos, responding to accusations of cruelty from animal welfare advocates, have instituted rules governing how rodeo livestock are to be managed.

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A BG-BGE

From Page One

'Power drunk' Siddaramaiah needs to be humbled: Gowda

Mr. Siddaramaiah, once a protege of Mr. Gowda, fell out with him in 2006, when the JD(S) expelled him over organising AHINDA conventions. AHINDA is an acronym for minorities, backward classes, and Dalits. The two have turned bitter rivals since then.

The rivalry passed on to the next generation when Mr. Gowda's son H.D. Kumaraswamy became the Chief Minister in 2006, joining hands with BJP, after toppling the then Congress-JD(S) coalition government in which Mr. Siddaramaiah was the Deputy Chief Minister. The two camps came together again in 2018 when the Congress and JD(S) formed a coalition government, but it lasted just over a year.

The Karnataka State Eligibility Test is now being conducted through the Karnataka Examinations Authority instead of the University of Mysore, which was the nodal centre for conducting the test all these years. FILE PHOTO

Candidates who qualify in KSET to get e-certificates

Jayanth R.
BENGALURU

To curb the menace of fake certificates and facilitate document verification, for the first time, the Karnataka Examinations Authority (KEA) has decided to distribute e-certificates to those who have qualified in the Karnataka State Eligibility Test (KSET), which is mandatory for the post of Assistant Professor in government, aided, and unaided degree colleges.

Henceforth, candidates who have qualified in the KSET exam can download the e-certificate from the KEA website instead of going to the KEA office for the certificate.

The KEA has been the examination authority since 2022.

It also distributes the certificates to eligible candidates. However, some candidates have used fake certificates to get jobs despite not qualifying in the KSET exam.

To prevent such incidents, the KEA has decided to issue e-certificates instead of physical certificates from this year.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, S. Ramya, Executive Director of KEA, said: "We have decided to issue e-certificates instead of physical certificates from this year to facilitate the candidates who have qualified in the KSET. Candidates can download the e-certificates using their login ID and password through the KEA website."

"Candidates have to submit hard copies of their educational documents while applying for any job, and verifying them is the biggest challenge. However, now it is mandatory to apply online for any vacancies in government and private sectors.

Private and corporate companies are also emphasising e-certificates. So, if e-certificates are distributed, document verification will be easier, and the scourge of fake certificates can be prevented," she added.

Candidates will be given a unique code along with the e-certificate. If the unique code is entered while verifying the documents online for employment in the government or private sector, all the details, including name, qualification, date of e-certificate issuance, issuing authority, and the candidate's photo, will be available immediately. So, it is easy to check online whether the e-certificates are genuine or fake as the complete database of candidates is available in KEA, she added.

"Also, some pass the KSET exam and do not get the certificate for about five to six years. Then, if they apply for a physical certificate, it is also difficult to find them. So, if the e-certificate is issued, it can be downloaded anytime," explained Ms. Ramya.

Spotlight
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Parks become inaccessible for poor and working class again

This development comes after the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike introduced the Hasiru Mitra scheme, under which local citizens were asked to look after the maintenance of parks on a voluntary basis

Shreyas H.S.
BENGALURU

BBMP
Timings : Morning : 5:00 am to 10:00am
Evening : 4:00 pm to 08:00 pm
Eatable Items, alcoholics Items, Drugs Items, Weapons, Smocking, Prohibited inside the Park Area

In 2022, the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike issued an order to keep parks open all through the day. FILE PHOTO

The ill-timed closing of parks in Bengaluru has yet again rendered these spaces inaccessible to poor and working class people who visit to rest or have lunch in the afternoon hours.

This development comes after BBMP introduced the Hasiru Mitra scheme under which local citizens were asked to look after the maintenance of parks on a voluntary basis.

In 2022, the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) issued an order to keep parks open all through the day. According to BBMP, parks should remain open between 6 a.m. and 8 p.m. They can be closed between 10 a.m. and 1.30 p.m.

Yet, in many areas, parks are locked at 9 a.m. or 10 a.m. only to be re-opened at 4.30 p.m.

The BBMP has 1,251 parks in Bengaluru. Of these, 506 parks are now controlled by local citizens, and Residents Welfare Associations have directed guards to shut the parks from morning to evening. These parks are closed after residents finish their walk in the morning and re-opened in the evening for them to walk again.

Srinivas S., a delivery personnel, said the timings for public access are discriminatory. Many food delivery workers and labourers come to the park to take rest, but are now forced to sit by the roadside under scorching heat.

Madhuri, a delivery worker, said, "In 2022, the BBMP's order came as a major relief to people like us. It helped thousands of people to gain access to these lung spaces. I savoured lunch under a tree, or sitting on the benches at Jayanagar. Now again, the problem is back. The BBMP should resolve the issue."

Vinay Sarathy, president of United Food Delivery Partners' Union, said people from different walks of life come to Bengaluru for various reasons, and parks become important places for the poor and blue collar workers, particularly, to sit and rest briefly, or to have food. "We are particularly concerned about food delivery partners who are always on the move. They need a place like a park. Hundreds of FDPs who carry food for others, have their own food in parks. The government must initiate measures to monitor and prevent any unauthorised persons regulating park timings," he said..

Vinay Srinivasa, an activist, said with the severe heat this summer, there is a need for parks to be open full day. The BBMP should take note of this situation and issue a fresh order.

BBMP Chief Commissioner Tushar Giri Nath said, "This is wrong practice. The BBMP rule mandates parks to be open throughout the day. The BBMP will check why this has not been happening, and will take appropriate steps."

IndiGo starts direct flights from city to Bali

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

IndiGo commenced daily direct flights between Bengaluru and Denpasar in Bali, Indonesia, on Friday. Expanding its network within Indonesia, Bali is the second destination, after Jakarta, to join the extensive 6E network.

This new connection will enhance accessibility for tourists from India heading to Bali.

Flight 6E 1605 will depart Bengaluru at 12.05 a.m. and land in Denpasar at 10.20 a.m.

Flight 6E 1606 will depart Denpasar at 11.20 a.m. and reach Bengaluru at 3.15 p.m.

Vinay Malhotra, Head of Global Sales at IndiGo, said, "This new connection will play a key role in strengthening ties between India and Indonesia while promoting tourism and fostering potential business collaborations."

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FIR against Arnab for fake news report

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Bengaluru police have registered a case against Arnab Goswami, editor-in-chief of Republic TV, and Niranjan, editor of the Kannada news channel of the same group (R Kannada), for allegedly airing a fake news report about Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

The duo has been booked under Section 505 (2) of Indian Penal Code for 'statements creating or promoting enmity, hatred or ill-will between classes'.

The complainant is Ravindra M. V., secretary, Legal Cell, Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee. He has alleged that on March 27 around 7.15 p.m., R Kannada channel aired a news story claiming that traffic on M. G. Road in Bengaluru was stopped to enable passage for Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and, hence, an ambulance was stuck. The news report was accompanied by a video that had been posted on social media. However, at that time, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah was not in Bengaluru. He was in Mysuru, according to the complainant.

Remembering the Cross

Holy day: Devotees take part in a special prayer to mark Good Friday at Francis Xavier Cathedral Church in Bengaluru. PTI

Metro calls tender to implement rainwater harvesting

Metro spans 73.75 km, of which 65.01 km is elevated with the potential to harvest rainwater. There are RWH systems in select stations

WATER WOES

Darshan Devaiah B.P.
BENGALURU

Amidst a severe water crisis, Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) has called a tender to implement rainwater harvesting (RWH) projects in Bengaluru to ensure that the rain falling on Namma Metro's elevated concrete tracks is used to recharge the groundwater table.

BMRCL officials said that the tender has been called to dig RWH pits below the viaduct along the metro alignment of Line 1 (Purple Line) and Line 2 (Green Line), and stations.

The metro spans 73.75 km, of which 65.01 km is elevated and has the potential to harvest rainwater. There are 65 stations; however, rainwater harvesting systems have been implemented only in select stations.

"We are planning to initiate rainwater harvesting at an estimated cost of ₹65 lakh. The potential for rainwater harvesting to replenish the groundwater table along metro lines is significant, which is why we have called a tender to initiate the process now," a BMRCL official said.

Aim of the RWH project is to ensure that the rain falling on metro's elevated tracks is used to recharge groundwater table. FILE PHOTO

At present, rainwater harvesting for groundwater recharge is solely accessible along the metro line connecting M.G. Road and Baiyappanahalli stations (Reach 1). BMRCL has built 3,000 litre-capacity underground tanks on both sides of every second metro pillar between M.G. Road and Baiyyappanahalli stations. In-built pipes carry rainwater from the duct to the tanks on the medians.

In June-July 2023, a survey conducted by the NGO ActionAid India revealed the absence of rainwater harvesting facilities along the Green and Purple lines of BMRCL.

According to its report: "A total of 1,189 pillars were surveyed. Across the 41 km stretch examined, it was observed that there were no rainwater harvesting structures in place to collect rainwater for groundwater recharge." The report recommended that BMRCL take up RWH initiatives along the Green, Purple, and Pink lines.

A BMRCL official said, "We have initiated the tendering process for implementing rainwater harvesting systems along the existing lines. Separate tenders will be called for upcoming lines, and those under construction."

Cafe blast: NIA announces ₹10 lakh reward on each of the two absconding prime accused

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has released the photographs and details of the two absconding prime accused in The Rameshwaram Cafe blast case – Abdul Matheen Ahmed Taahaa, 30, and Mussavir Hussain Shazib, 30 – and announced a reward of ₹10 lakh on each of them.

The NIA on Thursday identified Mussavir Hussain as the alleged bomber at the restaurant and Abdul Matheen Taaha as the key conspirator behind the attack.

The NIA has said the informant's identities will be kept confidential. The NIA has said Abdul Matheen Taahaa is known to have assumed names Vignesh D. and Sumit, and Mussavir Hussain was using a forged driving licence in the name of Mohammed Juned Sayed.

Wanted: The NIA has released the photographs of the two accused, Mussavir Hussain Shazib and Abdul Matheen Ahmed Taahaa .

According to the police, the duo have been on the run since 2020, when they were listed as accused in the Al-Hind Module case, but managed to give a slip to the agencies.

The NIA had earlier announced a reward of ₹3 lakh for any information leading to the arrest of Abdul Matheen Taahaa. After the module was busted, the duo, on the run, put together the Tirthahalli module involved in four cases now - pro-terror graffiti in Mangaluru in 2020, trial blast and terror conspiracy case in Shivamogga in September 2022, cooker blast in Mangaluru in November 2022, and The Rameshwaram Cafe blast earlier this month.

Meanwhile, the NIA has secured seven-day custody of Muzammil Shareef, the sole person arrested in The Rameshwaram Cafe blast case. The NIA said he "extended logistic support to the other two identified accused in the case."

Muzammil Shareef hails from Kalasa, Chikkamagaluru district, and his family resides at Dubai Nagar in Chikkamagaluru town, sources said. Shareef has been working in Bengaluru for the past 16 years and till recently worked at a chicken shop in Basaveshwara Nagar. He is suspected to have given shelter to the alleged bomber Mussavir Hussain Shazib in Bengaluru, helped him flee the city and also suspected to have procured some raw materials for the Improvised Explosive Device.

Prostitution racket: 3 held

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Based on information a woman police constable received during her rounds, the North East Division Police raided a house in Amruthahahlli from where a prostitution racket was being run. Three persons were arrested.

They were running a "high-tech prostitution ring" using mobile apps designed for the purpose. Police have recovered 13 phones, a scooter, a car, and ₹30,000 cash from them.

Man killed after water tanker knocks him down

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A 21-year-old man working in a fabrication factory in Yeshwanthpur was killed when a water tanker knocked down the two-wheeler he was riding in Veerannapalya near Hebbal flyover on Friday morning.

Mahesh fell to the right side of the bike, and the tanker ran over him. The pillion rider, who suffered serious injuries, is stated to be out of danger.

The Hebbal Traffic Police have arrested the tanker driver.

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Call for applications/nominations for appointment to the post of President

The Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR), Bengaluru, is a deemed to be University and a premier research institute, established under the aegis of Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India, with the objective to pursue and promote scientific research and training at the highest level in the frontier and interdisciplinary areas of science and engineering.

JNCASR invites applications/nominations, from eminent academicians/researchers with substantial experience and achievements in the areas of physical sciences/ chemical sciences/life sciences/ any other related interdisciplinary area for the position of President. Applications/Nominations received will be considered by Search-cum-Selection Committee. Based on the recommendations of the Search-cum-Selection Committee, the President will be appointed after obtaining the approval of the Competent Authority.
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BENGALURU

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RISE	22:48	SET 09:28
SUNDAY, MAR. 31		
RISE	06:16	SET 18:31
RISE	23:46	SET 10:18
MONDAY, APR. 01		
RISE	06:16	SET 18:31
RISE	00:00	SET 11:14

Bengaluru Weather	max	min
Tumakuru	35	25
Mysuru	36	23
Bengaluru	36	24

Bengaluru Today
35ºC A dry weather to continue. Morning will be pleasant with mist and haze. Day will be warm. Night also will be pleasant.

Bengaluru Tomorrow
34ºC The weather will be dry. Morning will be pleasant with mist and haze. Day will be warm and uneasy. Night will be pleasant.

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THE HINDU
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Cong. announces three more names, suspense continues over Kolar

Candidates named for Chamarajanagar, Chickballapur, Ballari Lok Sabha constituencies; factional rivalry among district leaders has made decision on Kolar seat tricky

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

On predictable lines, the Congress central election committee on Friday announced candidates for three Lok Sabha constituencies of Chamarajanagar, Chickballapur, and Ballari, leaving Kolar pending following factional rivalry among district Congress leaders.

The party has fielded Sunil Bose, son of Social Welfare Minister H.C. Mahadevappa in Chamarajanagar (SC) reserved constituency. In Ballari (ST) reserved constituency, MLA E. Tukaram bagged the party ticket. Despite intense lobbying by senior leaders such as the former Union Minister M. Veerappa Moily and the former Minister N.H. Shivashankara Reddy, the party cleared the name of Raksha Ramaiah, son of the former Minister M.R. Seetharam in Chickballapur. Both Mr. Moily and Mr. Reddy had questioned the contributions of Mr. Ramaiah, former State Youth Congress chief, to Chickballapur district.

Sunil Bose will contest in Chamarajanagar constituency, Raksha Ramaiah in Chickballapur, and E. Tukaram in Ballari.

So far, the party has announced candidates for 27 of the 28 constituencies in the State, except Kolar.

Even before the official announcement, Mr. Bose and Mr. Tukaram started campaigns in Chamarajanagar and Ballari constituencies, respectively. Mr. Bose called on incumbent MP V. Srinivas Prasad of the BJP, who has been benched by the party and sought the latter's support. Mr. Ramaiah too has been active in the Chickballapur constituency during the last few months.

However, the suspense continued over the candidature for Kolar reserved (SC) constituency. Though the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) has reportedly recommended the name of K.V. Gowtham, president of the Bengaluru Central District Congress Committee, the AICC has not cleared his name.

Sources in the party said that the KPCC has suggested the name of Mr. Gowtham after talks with a faction led by Food and Civil Supplies Minister K.H. Muniyappa, seven-time MP, as well as "rebel" legislators. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister and KPCC president D.K. Shivakumar on Thursday spoke to both.

A faction led by the former Legislative Assembly Speaker K.R. Ramesh Kumar and five legislators have been opposing the candidature of Chikka Peddanna, son-in-law of Mr. Muniyappa.

Janata Dal (S) announces list

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Janata Dal (Secular) on Friday announced the candidature of H.D. Kumaraswamy for Mandya Lok Sabha constituency, Prajwal Revanna for Hassan, and Mallesh Babu for Kolar.

The JD(S) is contesting only these three seats as part of the coalition arrangement with the BJP, and the candidates had been decided earlier and only a formal announcement was awaited.

BJP seeks action against Yathindra

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has lodged a complaint with the Election Commission of India (EC) against the former MLA Yathindra Siddaramaiah, son of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, for his statements against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

'A violation'
The BJP has alleged that Mr. Yathindra's statements that Mr. Modi was responsible for the "mass murder of minorities in Gujarat" and that Mr. Shah "had a criminal background" was a violation of norms laid down by the EC in 2013 which prohibited "attacks on personal life of any person or statements that may be malicious, or offending decency and morality".

Condemned
The former Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa has condemned Mr. Yathindra's statements and said it was an indication of the frustration in the Congress over the BJP-JD(S) combine's performance on the ground.

"Being a former MLA and son of a Chief Minister it is unfortunate he has resorted to usage of such derogatory language," he said.

BJP-JD(S) meet: Old rivals vow to put past behind, plan joint campaigns

JD(S) and BJP leaders, led by veterans H.D. Deve Gowda and B.S. Yediyurappa, at a coordination meeting of the alliance partners in Bengaluru on Friday. K. MURALI KUMAR

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Alliance partners Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Janata Dal (Secular) have decided to conduct joint campaigns and form coordination committees with one leader from each party in districts where the regional party has a strong presence, sources said.

The former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda and the former Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy of the JD(S) will likely be part of the upcoming Prime Minister Narendra Modi rallies in South Karnataka, BJP sources said. Apart from this, BJP and JD (S) leaders are likely to campaign together and the schedules are yet to be worked out.

These decisions were reportedly taken at a BJP-JD (S) coordination meeting held in the city on Friday. The event led by Mr. Yediyurappa and Mr. Gowda turned out to be a platform for the display of a rare bonhomie between those who had been at loggerheads earlier. The top leaders donned shawls of both parties.

Mr. Kumaraswamy recalled that the alliance between the two parties back in 2006 did not last long and ended on a bitter note due to "unavoidable circumstances" and said all that happened in the past were "ordained by fate". But he wondered if the two parties had formed the government in 2018, instead of the JD(S)-Congress coalition formed then, whether they would have continued to be in power. "This alliance has been crafted with a view of development and security of the nation," he said. Mr. Gowda said the two parties could win the Lok Sabha election only if they put the past behind them.

Double blessing
BJP State president B.Y. Vijayendra said back in 2006, Mr. Gowda had opposed the alliance between the two parties on ideological grounds, but they had now got a shot in the arm as both Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the JD(S) supremo had blessed the alliance this time. "I have travelled in Mysuru and Mandya constituencies with Mr. Kumaraswamy and witnessed the bonhomie and enthusiasm of the workers of the two parties. I am confident that this alliance will deliver a historic verdict in Karnataka," he said.

Now, mahasabha supports demand for replacing Pralhad Joshi

The Hindu Bureau
HUBBALLI

Close on the heels of Dingaleshwar Swami of Shirahatti Fakkireshwar Mutt and other Veerashaiva-Lingayat seers demanding a change in candidature in Dharwad Lok Sabha constituency where Union Minister Pralhad Joshi has been fielded, the Dharwad district unit of Akhila Bharat Veerashaiva Lingayat Mahasabha has extended support to the demand.

The Lingayat leaders and office-bearers of the mahasabha unit, including Eshwarchandra Hosamani and Viranna Yalalli, told presspersons in Dharwad on Thursday that they fully supported the demand of Sri Dingaleshwar Swami on giving BJP ticket to a Veerashaiva-Lingayat leader instead of Mr. Joshi.

Mr. Hosamani said Dharwad constituency has the highest number of Lingayat voters and none of the parties have given ticket to a leader from the community.

The BJP has given ticket to the same leader four times in a row and they will urge the party to field a Veerashaiva-Lingayat leader this time, he said.

Vijayendra meets Sumalatha on the eve of her meeting with supporters

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

BJP State president B.Y. Vijayendra met Independent Member of Parliament (MP) for Mandya Sumalatha Ambareesh at her J.P. Nagar residence here on Friday evening and appealed for her support to the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) candidate H.D. Kumaraswamy in Mandya.

This comes on the eve of the meeting of her supporters convened by Ms. Sumalatha in Mandya on Saturday, to chart her next course of action.

BJP State president B.Y. Vijayendra called on MP for Mandya Sumalatha Ambareesh in Bengaluru on Friday.

"Ms. Sumalatha Ambareesh has supported the BJP in Parliament. Given that the party's national leadership has decided to give the Mandya seat to the JD(S) as part of the alliance, it is my duty to meet the incumbent MP and seek her support. I have appealed for her support and assured her that if she supports the NDA candidate now, her future will be bright. We hope there will be a good decision in our favour," Mr. Vijayendra said after the meeting.

Rehabilitating her
Sources in the party said rehabilitating Ms. Ambareesh either in the Karnataka Legislative Council or in the Rajya Sabha was being discussed, but nothing has been finalised yet. Ms. Ambareesh reiterated that the BJP should have retained the Mandya seat and said she would never leave Mandya. "I have called a meeting of my supporters in Mandya on Saturday. I will announce my stand after the meeting," she said.

Upset over Karjol's nomination, MLA, son meet supporters

The Hindu Bureau
SHIVAMOGGA

Holalkere MLA M. Chandrappa of the BJP and his son Raghuchandan, who was an aspirant for the BJP ticket to contest for the Chitradurga Lok Sabha seat, held a meeting with their supporters on Thursday. The father-son duo is upset after the party chose to field the former Minister Govind Karjol in Chitradurga.

Mr. Chandrappa, speaking to the press after the meeting, said he would take a decision on fielding his son as an Independent candidate after consulting his leaders. "We are thinking of filing his nomination papers on April 3. I need to consult some leaders. Later, we will announce our final decision," he said.

'An outsider'
Mr. Raghuchandan questioned the logic behind fielding Mr. Karjol, who suffered a defeat in Mudhol in the last Assembly polls. "In what way is he connected with Chitradurga? Does he know anything about Chitradurga? We will not work for his election," he said. Mr. Raghuchandan said his final decision on contesting would depend on the BJP's decision since they have requested the party to reconsider the candidature.

He said the former Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa had assured him of an opportunity to contest for the Lok Sabha. "I have been working with people in the constituency for the last five years. We appealed to the party not to ignore Bovi, a large community in the State," he said.

Senior leaders of the BJP and the Sangha Parivar have contacted both the father and the son over the phone and tried to convince them.

Nearly 12 lakh people eligible to vote from home in State

Afshan Yasmeen
BENGALURU

Over 5.7 lakh senior citizens aged 85 and above and 6.13 lakh people with disabilities (PwD) in the State can opt to vote from home (VfH) during the Lok Sabha election.

Officials from the Election Commission have started the process of distributing Form 12D through which eligible vote-from-home electors can inform the Assistant Returning Officer that he or she is not in a position to go to the polling station to vote. Interested electors can give their consent in the form within five days after the poll notification is issued. Notification was issued on March 28 for the first phase of polls in Karnataka. People can also download the form from the EC's website (https://www.eci,gov,in), fill it up and submit it to their jurisdictional Returning Officer's office within the prescribed window.

The Election Commission of India (EC) for the first time made available the facility of VfH for those aged above 80 and certified persons with disabilities (whose disability is not less than 40% of the prescribed handicap) during the pandemic in the 2020 Bihar Assembly elections.

Assembly elections
In the 2023 Assembly elections in Karnataka, around one lakh people voted from home. Nearly 95% (76,120) of the 80,251 senior citizens (who had opted) and over 97% (18,811) of the 19,280 PwDs (who had opted) voted from home.

According to data from the Election Commission, Dakshina Kannada had recorded the highest number of senior citizens who voted from home (10,280) followed by Belagavi (6,975) and Tumakuru (6,333). In the PwD category, Tumakuru recorded the highest (2,788) followed by Dakshina Kannada (1,926) and Belagavi (1,661).

Manoj Kumar Meena, Chief Electoral Officer for Karnataka, said it is an optional facility for those who cannot go to the polling booth and vote. "It will always be good to vote at polling stations and take part in the festival of democracy but if a person is not in a position to walk or he she choose to vote from home then this facility has been provided," he said.

He said two polling officials, accompanied by a videographer and a security person, would visit the electors' home and enable them to vote in a postal ballot. The electors would be informed in advance about the date and approximate time of the visit of election officials by an SMS to the mobile number mentioned in the application, he said. "If they prefer to go to the polling booths, the officials will also make necessary arrangements for them to vote in person," he said.

If the elector is not present at the given address during the first visit under VfH, the polling team will inform about the schedule of their second visit. If they are not present even on the second visit, a further visit will not be entertained.

'Congress' criticism of BJP lacks dignity of language'

The Hindu Bureau
MYSURU

Kannada writer S.L Bhyrappa has flayed the Congress for its criticism of the BJP leadership in what he called an '"undignified language".

He was interacting with the media after the BJP candidate for the Mysuru Lok Sabha constituency, Yaduveer Srikantadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar, called on him at this residence at Kuvempunagar on Friday.

"The BJP till recently had dignity in language but of late it is now emulating the Congress and this should not be the case. The BJP should not emulate the Congress in the choice of words or language and lower its dignity," said Mr. Bhyrappa.

Fielding a slew of questions on the current political scenario and the upcoming elections, Mr. Bhyrappa referred to the guarantee schemes of the Congress and said that it has "adopted the wrong path". Having spent the resources on giving away what he called "freebies", he said the Congress was now blaming the Union government and attacking the BJP leadership, including the Finance Minister. But its language was undignified, said Mr. Bhyrappa.

BJP candidate for the Mysuru Lok Sabha constituency Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar met writer S.L. Bhyrappa on Friday. M.A. SRIRAM

In reply to a question, he said fielding Mr. Wadiyar was a good development and remarked that the latter was well educated and had studied abroad and hence may bring in a new approach to development works. He described the incumbent MP, Prathap Simha, as a "dynamic" person. "As an MP he opposed the Tipu Jayanti celebration and his spirit had not waned though he had been denied the ticket. But there are other equally important works within the party that extend beyond the works in one constituency and I am sure Mr. Simha has taken the denial of the ticket in that spirit," he said.

On the support of a majority of writers and litterateurs to the Congress, Mr. Bhyrappa said those espousing left-wing views, including left-wing writers, were "dishonest" and adopted "double standards".

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

IN MEMORIAM

IN MEMORIAM

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Raju MS Purchased Product Washing Machine
P Sagayaraj Purchased Product Laptop
Somendhar Reddy Purchased Product Mobile
Kalam Purchased Product Mobile
Arlene D'cruze Purchased Product LED TV
Ashok K Purchased Product Washing Machine
Rajesh Purchased Product Mobile
Sunil Kumar B Purchased Product Stabilizer
Bhargavi Purchased Product Refrigerator
Veeresh Purchased Product Mobile
Likith Purchased Product Mobile
Manohar Athmakur Purchased Product Mobile
Radha L Purchased Product LED TV
Farheen Begum Purchased Product Refrigerator
P Swapna Purchased Product Refrigerator
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Couple held for bid to kill woman and for stealing valuables

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A couple has been arrested for an alleged attempt on the life of the woman's aunt and stealing valuables from her house.

According to the police, the victim Annamma has no children and adopted her sister's daughter Suchitra, who is presently living with her second husband Muniraju. The couple were facing financial difficulties.

Annamma, a senior citizen, owned a building in Yeshwanthpur and was living off its rent. As she was not proficient with banking, she had kept all her valuables at home.

On the night of March 18, Suchitra took her aunt Annamma to the RMC yard saying that the private firm that she worked at had not given her salary and asked her to talk to the owner to get him to pay her. Her husband Muniraju was already at the spot and Suchitra made an excuse and left the spot.

According to the police, Muniraju allegedly stabbed Annamma with a weapon from behind, injuring her. But as she screamed for help, Muniraju fled the scene. An injured Annamma was rushed to the hospital. When she returned home, she found all the valuables missing from her house.

National parties often ignore regional aspirations, says EPS

Regional parties are better equipped to represent people and expedite development initiatives in States, says AIADMK general secretary and Tamil Nadu Leader of the Opposition Palaniswami

T. Ramakrishnan
D. Suresh Kumar
CHENNAI

Criticising national parties for "ignoring" regional aspirations "many times", AIADMK general secretary and Leader of the Opposition Edappadi K. Palaniswami on Friday said that regional parties, such as his own, were better equipped to represent the people and expedite development initiatives in the States.

In an interview to *The Hindu* at his official residence, Sevanthi, on Greenways Road in Chennai, Mr. Palaniswami, who took time off his busy Lok Sabha election campaign schedule, said, "In a country such as ours with much diversity", regional parties fulfilled the regional aspirations.

Sometimes, this made national parties less relevant in some States. "There is no necessity that a national party has to rule every State to bring about development in the country," the former Chief Minister said.

AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami during an interview with *The Hindu* in Chennai on Friday. AKHILA EASWARAN

PM candidate

In a parliamentary democracy, there was no need to identify the Prime Minister before the election. Today, many parties were contesting in the election with no prime ministerial candidate.

After the election, the prime ministerial candidate may emerge, depending on the relative strength of the parties in Parliament, he said.

"We will play an appropriate role in determining the Prime Minister who is concerned about Tamil Nadu and who listens to the genuine demands of our State," he said, answering a question whether people of the State would accept a front that did not project anyone as the prime ministerial candidate and did not have any national party.

The former Chief Minister added that principal political players in West Bengal, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh, too, were not promoting anyone for the post of Prime Minister.

Asked whether his party would not require the support of a national party as it promised several measures to boost the revenue of the States, Mr. Palaniswami replied, "We feel a revisit to the Central fiscal policy is the need of the hour, especially after the introduction of the GST [Goods and Services Tax] as the States' own resources are dwindling. If the idea is acceptable [to many], we will press in Parliament for such a course of action. Further, it is not necessary that one should be part of the government to get such policies implemented. We can be a rallying point among like-minded parties to mobilise support and press for the implementation of many of our proposals."

On the circumstances that led to the AIADMK's separation from the BJP and exit from the National Democratic Alliance, Mr. Palaniswami acknowledged that on matters concerning the State, "we were not able to function independently while in the alliance".

Primary job

It was the people of the State who "elect us" and "it is our primary job to resolve their problems", he said.

Apart from the BJP State leadership "denigrating" AIADMK founder M.G. Ramachandran and former Chief Ministers C.N. Annadurai and Jayalalithaa, the State was "being neglected at the national level", he pointed out.

When asked about the DMK alliance being stronger, he said, "It is an illusion to say that the DMK alliance looks stronger. The ground realities are different. The fight is tough as the ruling party will use money and muscle power, but we will emerge victorious with the support of the people. There is a considerable amount of mood against the incumbents at the Centre and in the State, and I feel that people will largely vote for our alliance."

On the opinion polls suggesting a big win for the BJP-led NDA, Mr. Palaniswami said, "Opinion polls are manipulated and fabricated. We ignore such polls but work with confidence at the field level to ensure the victory of our candidates."

Phone-tapping case: Another police official arrested

Naveen Kumar
Lavpreet Kaur
HYDERABAD

The Hyderabad city police officials probing the phone- tapping case are focussed on recovering destroyed evidence.

While remnants of hard drive have been traced in the Musi River, other pieces of data have also been discovered elsewhere, officials informed. About 42 hard drives containing illegally curated profiles of several individuals were destroyed and replaced with new ones on the night of December 4, 2023, the day Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) lost the Telangana State Assembly Elections, a complaint filed by D. Ramesh, Additional SP with the SIB stated.

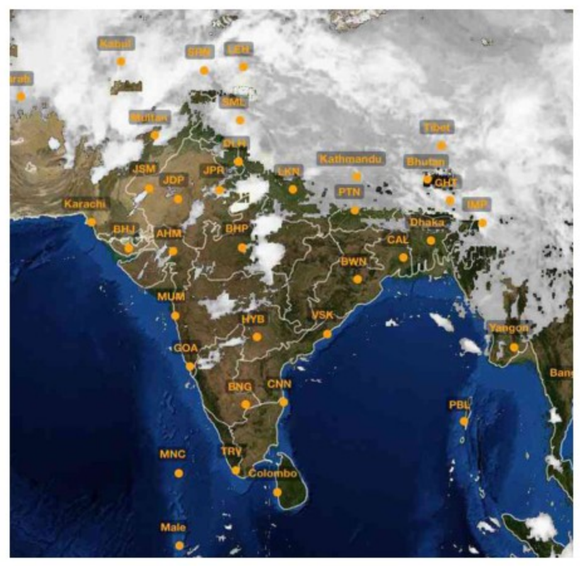
On Friday, R. Radhakrishna Rao, former DCP of Commissioner's Task Force, Hyderabad, was arrested. According to the officials, Mr. Radhakrishna Rao was also found to be involved in facilitating movement of cash and gold during the 2023 election season.

Meanwhile, the West Zone Police concluded the first day of questioning of Additional DCP of CSW Mekala Thirupathanna and Additional Superintendent of Police of Bhupalpally, Nayini Bhujanga Rao, who were arrested earlier this week in the same case.

Meanwhile, Three politicians have come forward with allegations that their phones and privacy was compromised by the SIB officials.

WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

Forecast for Saturday: Heavy rainfall/snowfall likely at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Muzaffarabad, Himachal Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Meghalaya. Thunderstorm with lightning/gusty winds likely at isolated places over Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, central Maharashtra and Marathwada

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	32.6	21.7	Kozhikode	—	37.0	28.1
Ahmedabad	—	39.0	26.4	Kurnool	—	42.3	27.7
Aizawl	1	30.2	16.6	Lucknow	—	36.0	22.4
Allahabad	—	39.7	22.7	Madurai	—	38.2	26.7
Bengaluru	—	36.4	23.6	Mangaluru	—	34.5	26.0
Bhopal	—	39.0	19.0	Mumbai	—	32.5	25.0
Bhubaneswar	—	37.4	25.0	Mysuru	—	36.0	22.0
Chandigarh	—	34.5	18.1	New Delhi	—	37.8	20.5
Chennai	—	36.2	25.2	Patna	—	34.2	23.3
Coimbatore	—	37.6	25.0	Port Blair	—	32.2	24.2
Dehradun	—	34.0	18.2	Puducherry	—	34.8	26.0
Gangtok	—	19.6	13.1	Pune	—	38.7	25.2
Goa	—	33.6	26.8	Raipur	—	40.1	26.3
Guwahati	—	33.8	18.8	Ranchi	—	35.5	20.4
Hubballi	—	39.0	22.0	Shillong	2	20.7	12.4
Hyderabad	—	40.2	25.4	Shimla	—	29.0	16.4
Imphal	2	28.1	12.1	Srinagar	25	14.5	8.2
Jaipur	—	37.9	26.7	Thiruvananthapuram	24	33.1	23.0
Kochi	—	33.0	26.6	Tiruchi	—	38.7	26.6
Kohima	—	21.4	11.6	Vijayawada	—	37.4	24.6
Kolkata	—	36.0	27.5	Visakhapatnam	—	32.5	26.6

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO_2	NO_2	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	4	.40	.20	155	143	
Bengaluru	.10	.16	.23	109	136	
Chennai	7	5	.67	44	44	
Delhi	.20	.89	.59	269	212	
Hyderabad	4	.33	.50	85	125	
Kolkata	.13	.27	.22	77	93	
Lucknow	.34	.12	.31	151	127	
Mumbai	.70	.42	.46	58	119	
Pune	105	137	116	74	79	
Visakhapatnam	.12	.42	.25	54	105	

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Nandesari, Gujarat recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 243 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Palkalaiperur, Tamil Nadu recorded a healthy AQI score of 28

Air Quality Code: Poor | Moderate | Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO_2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Church leaders stress need to fight 'divisive forces'

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Church leaders on Friday slammed the attacks on Christian communities in Manipur and North India, and called for a united stand against divisive forces that seek to terrorise people in the name of religion and race. Archbishop Thomas J. Netto of the Latin Archdiocese of Thiruvananthapuram underscored the need to fight and defeat narrow-minded approaches expressed through legislations such as the Citizenship (Amendment) Act. Archbishop Netto said the need to adopt a strong stance against disruptive forces should be understood.

Loco pilots pressured to violate safety norms for punctuality

S. Vijay Kumar
CHENNAI

In a shocking incident reported in the Salem Division of Southern Railway, the loco pilots of a relief engine were allegedly pressured to run it at 50 kmph, instead of the prescribed 15 kmph, to prevent loss of punctuality.

Railway sources said that a freight train was held up between the Veerapandi Road and Magudan Chavidi stations due to a locomotive failure, leading to a section block on March 14. Another freight train was detained at Veerapandi Road and its locomotive was detached for the relief operation.

The station master gave the loco pilot 'T/A 602' the authority to cross the red signal and proceed without line clear at a speed not exceeding 15 kmph during day and 10 kmph at night. The loco pilots proceeded as instructed and moved the detained rake in the mid-section to the next destination, the sources said.

However, loco pilot Kalu Ram Meena and assistant loco pilot Rohit Kumar Shah were accused of causing loss of punctuality and not contacting the Traction Loco Controller before entering the occupied block section.

The sources told *The Hindu* that the Chief Loco Inspector phoned the loco pilot and urged him to run the relief engine at 50 kmph. Though the loco pilot said he was running the engine at 15 kmph in accordance with the 'T/A 602' authority, the Chief Loco Inspector insisted that he run at 50 kmph because three following trains were getting delayed.

'Threat to safety'

Protesting the punishment proposed against the loco pilots, the All India Loco Running Staff Association has petitioned the Principal Chief Operations Manager, Southern Railway, that threatening the loco pilots to violate the rules amounted to a serious threat to safe train operations.

SOUTH CENTRAL RAILWAY
Follow us on @SCRailwayindia
Details of the Tender Notices of S.C Railway can be seen on our website : www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in

TENDER NOTICE NO: 65/2024 Dt.28.03.2024.
SUPPLY OF STORES ITEMS
e-Procurement Tender Notice

PUB0312

The Following Tenders Have Been Floated Online. Tenders Are Requested To Visit The Website **www.ireps.gov.in** And Submit Their Offers Online. The Tender Description, Qty, EMD, SD May Be Seen In Website. Offers Submitted Manually Will Not Be Accepted. Offers By Post Will Not Be Entertained. Tender Closing Time Is 14.30 Hrs Of The Due Date Of The Tender. "For All Indigenous Offers, EMD Will Be Accepted Only Via Online System As Available On **www.ireps.gov.in**."

Tender No.	Brief Description
LH245388A	Current insulated cylindrical roller
33.23.1549A	N-2 Board to Ftrtipl part No.1/600008A
30.24.3621	Set of upper flange for UIC type rubber
38.23.2322A	AAR Grease CTRB
60.23.7720	Procurement of input shaft,guide Roller
85.23.1037B	Auxiliary Machine Bearing
30.24.3582	POH KIT FOR 203mm
82.23.5030	Computed Tomography (CT SCAN)
29.23.1149A	IOH Gasket kit for EP Contactors
29.23.1415	TOH Gasket kit for EP Contactors
66.24.5225	Procurement of Descending chain
66.24.5105	Procurement of Optical Rail Profile
38.24.1016	Yoke for CBC
29.24.1389	Holder for Traction Motor
82.24.1448A	Zonal Rate Contract for supply of (PH NO;10061)
38.24.1009	Articulated Lock Lift

Note:-Due dates of Tender Opening: SL.NO 01.to 05on dt.15.04.2024 SL No.06 on dt 17.04.2024 SL.no.07 on dt 18.04.2024 SL No 08 to 12 on dt 22.04.2024 SL.NO. 13 on dt 25.04.2024 SL.NO.14 on dt 26.04.2024 SL NO. 15 on dt 29.04.2024 SL.No.16 on dt 01.05.2024

CORRIGENDUM

Tender Notice No.63/2024 dt.15.03.2024.Tender No.29.24.5001.due on 05.04.2024. Brief. Compact design upgraded 7p RSI block suitable. May be read as tender **No.25.24.5001 insted of existing**

Beside Above Mentioned Tenders There Are Other Tenders Having Value Below **Rs.25 Lakhs.**

For Details, Please Visit Railway Website Above.

Principal Chief Material Manager/Secunderabad
A0393

For further tender conditions / details and for downloading the tender documents, Please visit website at https://www.ireps.gov.in or www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in

FORM A
PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT
(Regulation 14 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (Voluntary Liquidation Process) Regulations, 2017)
FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE STAKEHOLDERS OF
CAPRICOAST HOME SOLUTIONS PRIVATE LIMITED

1	NAME OF CORPORATE PERSON	CAPRICOAST HOME SOLUTIONS PRIVATE LIMITED
2	DATE OF INCORPORATION OF CORPORATE PERSON	04/12/2014
3	AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH CORPORATE PERSON IS INCORPORATED / REGISTERED	ROC-Bangalore
4	CORPORATE IDENTITY NUMBER / LIMITED LIABILITY IDENTITY NUMBER OF CORPORATE PERSON	U36103KA2014PTC077612
5	ADDRESS OF THE REGISTERED OFFICE AND PRINCIPAL OFFICE (IF ANY) OF CORPORATE PERSON	No 728, 1st Floor, Grace Platina CMH Road, Indiranagar, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India, 560038
6	LIQUIDATION COMMENCEMENT DATE OF CORPORATE PERSON	29/03/2024
7	NAME, ADDRESS, EMAIL ADDRESS, TELEPHONE NUMBER AND THE REGISTRATION NUMBER OF THE LIQUIDATOR, AUTHORISATION FOR ASSIGNMENT (AFA) Validity	CS THIRUPAL GORIGE NO. 87, 2ND FLOOR, 21ST CROSS, 7TH MAIN, N S. PALYA, BTM 2ND STAGE, BANGALORE-560076, KARNATAKA, INDIA. CELL +91 94483 84064, LL +080 7963 4233 EMAIL: GTHIRUPAL@GMAIL.COM IP REG. NO. IBBI/IPA-002/IP-N00016/2016-17/10030 AFA valid upto21/05/2024
8	LAST DATE FOR SUBMISSION OF CLAIMS	28/04/2024

Notice is hereby given that **CAPRICOAST HOME SOLUTIONS PRIVATE LIMITED** has commenced voluntary liquidation on 29.03.2024.
The stakeholders of **CAPRICOAST HOME SOLUTIONS PRIVATE LIMITED** are hereby called upon to submit a proof of their claims, on or before 28.04.2024 to the liquidator at the address mentioned against item 7.
The financial creditors shall submit their proof of claims by electronic means only. All other stakeholders may submit the proof of claims in person, by post or by electronic means.
Submission of false or misleading proofs of claim shall attract penalties.

Sd/-
Thirupal Gorige
Liquidator

Date : 30.03.2024
Place : Bangalore

Form No. 22 and 18
General Notice in respect of interlocutary Application and Notice for appearance in Appeals
Order 41 Rule 14 CPC, and Rules 1,2,4 and 11 of Chapter IV Karnataka High Court Rules
IN THE HIGH COURT OF KARNATAKA AT BENGALURU
MFA No. 7925/ 2018 (MV-SJ)

Appellant : **Smt Bhavani Prasanna,** aged 55 years, Wife of Prasanna Kumar, No.146/6, 7th Cross, Coconut Avenue Road, Malleswaram, Bangalore-560003. **By Sri M.K. Venkatramana Adv**
-- Vs --
Respondents : 1. Smt Syed Anjum Fathima, Aged 50 Years, Wife of Late Syed Wasim @ Syed Abdul Bakhi, Residing at No.43, Sirsi Road, Chamarajapet, Bangalore-560018. **And Others**

Appeal From the Judgement/Award/Order passed on **dated 31/05/2018** in **MVC NO. 1617/2015** on the file of the XXII ADDITIONAL SMALL CAUSES JUDGE AND MEMEBR MACT BENGLAURU.IA NO.1/2018 for condone the delay of 12 days in filing the above appeal.
To: R1 TO R7 **Respondent No.1 TO R7**
1. Smt Syed Anjum Fathima, Aged 50 Years, Wife of Late Syed Wasim @ Syed Abdul Bakhi, Residing at No.43, Sirsi Road, Chamarajapet, Bangalore-560018.
2. Sri Syed Shahabag Ahmed, Aged 27 Years, Son of Late Wasim @ Syed Abdul Bakhi, Residing at No.43, Sirsi Road, Chamarajpet, Bangalore-560018.
3. Smt Shameem, Aged about 43 Years, Wife of Late Syed Wasim @ Syed Abdul Bakhi, Residing at No.1843/A, Third Main, Marena Halli, Tank Bund Road, 5th Block, Jayanagar, Bangalore- 560011.
4. Ms Syed Umme Hani, Aged 14 Years, Daughter of Late Syed Wasim @ Syed Abdul Bakhi, Being Minor, Represetned by her Mother/Natural Guardian Smt. Shameem, Aged 43 Years, Wife of Late Syed Wasim @ Syed Abul Bakhi, Residing at No.1843/A, Third Main, Marena Halli, Tank Bund Road, 5th Block, Jayanagar, Bangalore -560011.
5. Ms Syed Saba, Aged 14 Years, Daughter of Late Syed Wasim @ Syed Abdul Bakhi, Being Minor, Represetned by her Mother/Natural Guardian Smt. Shameem, Aged 43 Years, Wife of Late Syed Wasim @ Syed Abul Bakhi, Residing at No.1843/A, Third Main, MarenaHalli, Tank Bund Road, 5th Block, Jayanagar, Bangalore-560011.
6. Smt Syeda Shahidunnissa, Aged 83 Years, Wife of Late K.Syed Abdul Ahad Residing at No.1843/A, Third Main, MarenaHalli, Tank Bund Road, 5th Block, Jayanagar, Bangalore-560011.
7. Sri Mohammed Zabiulla Sharief, Aged About 30 Years, Son of Rahamathulla Sheriff, Residing at No.74, 5th Cross, Tippunagar, Chamarajpet, Bangalore -560018.
(Present Owner of Car **KA-04-MF-7741**)
Whereas the aforementioned Appeal preferred has been registered by this Court.
NOTICE IS HEREBY given to you to appear in this Court in person or through an Advocate duly instructed or through some one authorised by law to act for you in this case **on 16/04/2024 at 10.30 a.m.,** in case you intend to contest the appeal. If you fail so to appear, the appeal will be dealt with, heard and decided in your absence.
Given under my hand and the seal of this court on THE **15TH DAY OF MARCH, 2024.**

By order of the Court, Sd/- Assistant Registrar

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LEGAL NOTICE

IN THE COURT OF THE 28th ADDL CITY CIVIL JUDGE MAYO HALL UNIT AT BANGALORE (CCH- 29)
O.S. NO. 25221/2022

BETWEEN:
ICICI Bank Limited,
Having its Registered office at Mythree Centre, No. 4, 101, Hosur Road, Bommanahalli, Bangalore- 560 068
Represented by its Collection Manager Sri Pramodh Gurumallappa B.
...PLAINTIFF
AND :
Mrs. Roseanne Joseph
....DEFENDANT

SUMMONS TO DEFENDANT

To,
Mrs. Roseanne Joseph
D/o Mr. Ebinizer Joseph,
Aged about 48 years, R/at Flat No.107, IJ Acacia Apartments, Block 1, Seegehalli, Virgonagar Post, Bangalore- 560 049

WHEREAS the Plaintiff has instituted above said suit against you for recovery of Rs. 9,92,502/- (Rupees Nine Lakh Ninety Two Thousand Five Hundred Two Only) together with interest @ 11.35% p.a., cost of the suit and to grant such other or further order relief. The above mentioned Defendant hereby summoned to appear before the Hon'ble 28th Additional City Civil & Sessions Judge **(CCH- 29)** in person or through a Counsel who can able to answer the claim made against you on **25/04/2024** at **11:00 a.m.** failing which the suit is heard and disposed ex-parte.
Given under my hand and the seal of the Hon'ble Court on this **25.03.2024.**

BY ORDER OF THE HON'BLE COURT
DEPUTY REGISTRAR
CITY CIVIL COURT
MAYO HALL UNIT, BANGALORE

ADVOCATE FOR PLAINTIFF
SA Associates,
No. 10, 7th Cross, Victoria Layout, Bangalore- 560 047

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to the public at large that my client, **SRI V. SWAMINATH** S/o Sri. Aswath Narayan, No. 6, Krishna Singh Lane, Halasuru Pet, Bengaluru North Tq., Bengaluru 560 002, intends to purchase the schedule property from **Smt. D.H. JAYARATNA** W/o Sri K.M. Rajendra, Resident of Kokkare Hosahalli, Hokunda Post, Uyyamballi Hobli, Kanakapura Taluk, Ramanagara Dist., PIN- 562119 for valuable consideration. If anyone has title, interest, charge, claim or objection etc., of any kinds over or upon the said property are hereby required to give notice thereof in writing together with the supporting documents and particulars of any such right or claim to the undersigned advocate, having address as No.41, "suraksha" 2nd Floor, 1st Main Road, Nagendra Block, BSK First Stage, Srinagara, Bengaluru–560 050, (M) 9480514262, **within 7 (seven) days** from the date of publication hereof, failing which the claim, if any, shall be deemed to have been released or waived.

SCHEDULE OF PROPERTY

All the piece and parcel of South-Eastern Portion of immovable property No. 63 & 64, (New No. 44), Hosakerehalli Village, Uttarahalli Hobli, Bengaluru South Taluk, having Hosakerehalli Village Katha No. 3/1, and at present having Municipal No.44, 2nd Main Road, Hosakerehalli, Banashankari 3rd Phase, within the limits of BBMP, Hosakerehalli Ward old Ward No. 55, New Ward No. 161 and PID No. 55-414-44; measuring East to West 40 feet and North to South 19 feet in all 760 sq. ft. and bounded on **East by** 25 feet Road, **West by** Western Portion of the Property sold to Sri. H.N. Shankara Murthy, **North by** Eastern side of Northern Portion of the property sold to Smt. Shruthi and and **South by** 25 feet Road, with 03 square RCC Roofed, Red Oxide Flooring and doors and windows are made out to jungle wood.

Place: BENGALURU
Date: 29-03-2024

Sd/- (NARJI A. SADANANDA)
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DESIGN

Building with purpose

Context-driven architecture creates structures that respond to specific environmental conditions and cultural values

Rachna Agarwal

In the world of design and aesthetics, harmony stands as a fundamental principle. It signifies a state of equilibrium, unity, and coherence where various elements converge to create a pleasing and visually appealing composition. Context-driven architecture furthers this principle by designing buildings that respond to specific environmental conditions, needs, and cultural values.

Climate and culture

Well-planned, spacious buildings that encourage free movement are the need of the hour. To establish a proper connection between spaces and their context, any design process must start with an extensive understanding of the physical location's environmental data and the region's weather patterns. Closed-off, walled structures can be redesigned into open, ventilated spaces that allow a wholesome interaction with the environment.

Once the climatic factors are considered, a biophilic design approach can be implemented to reconnect with nature. The inclusion of direct or indirect elements of nature into the built environment has shown to reduce stress, anxiety and ill-health while increasing productivity, creativity and well-being.

User experience

Architecture is notably responsive to regional influences, largely due to the extended lifespan of housing projects. These influences have evolved over recent years, moving beyond conventional home layouts. With the advent of central air conditioning, it has become easier to introduce more natural light into homes, where previously this might have caused uncomfortable heat. Personal preferences also wield substantial influence in design, especially in residential projects. The concept of beach houses featuring swimming pools may have appeared superfluous a few decades ago, but today infinity pools overlooking the ocean signify opulence.

Energy efficiency

Practical design can be highly value-additive in various ways. For instance, designing a building with energy-efficient features like proper insulation, energy-efficient windows, and HVAC systems can significantly reduce long-term energy costs for the occupants.

When we design workspaces, we ensure that glass windows replace walls not only for better acoustics but also to accentuate natural light and induce a happier and more productive mood. Flexi-spaces accommodate varied shifting needs of the constantly evolving and changing world – both social and environmental. Malleable, movable and multi-purpose interiors that adapt to the evolving needs are key elements of flexi-spaces. For instance, designing a flexible office space with modular furniture allows a company to reconfigure the layout as the business evolves easily. Sliding doors instead of regular ones facilitate easier movement, help save more space and create open-plan layouts that are multi-functional.

Incorporating features like ramps, handrails, and wide doorways makes spaces accessible to individuals with disabilities, enhancing the inclusivity and value of a building.

The right palette

The material palette for both terrains should be planned, considering the environment and weather conditions. A locally sourced material palette effectively discourages the build-up of moss on the walls of the structure, thereby enabling minimal maintenance. For instance, we designed a home in Goa where the ground floor has been conceptualised as a monolithic base, keeping privacy intact via optimum glazing. The first floor witnesses the introduction of larger glazed sections and apertures, which offer transforming views as the altitude changes and the day morphs from dawn to dusk.

Likewise, in mountainous areas, materials like stone and wood are recommended, considering extreme weather patterns, uneven and sloping topography, limited site access and various other constraints. Materials used in contemporary mountain homes are straightforward, robust, and easy to care for. Common material selections include stone, wood, copper, and weathered steel. These choices are well-suited for the demanding mountain climate and demand minimal maintenance. They are selected with care to blend harmoniously with the natural surroundings and boast impressive longevity. In certain instances, materials can be procured directly from the construction site or local sources, helping to alleviate challenges associated with restricted site access.

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

Home construction and design GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Sustainable design practices, such as using recycled materials, renewable energy sources, and rainwater harvesting systems, not only reduce environmental impact but can also result in long-term cost savings, making a property more valuable

Adoption of aesthetics

I feel that traditionally enclosed classrooms should be replaced with flexible and experiential learning spaces that help push the envelope for children and encourage them to explore the outdoors, kindling self-discovery. A Nordic design style uses a harmonious and eco-friendly material palette, blending textures and soft hues to induce warmth and snugness in the classrooms. The focus should be on optimisation of the volumes through minimalism, clean lines and clutter-free spaces, stretching its domain to an accessible, barrier-free environment that enables safety and security for specially-abled individuals. Sliding glass doors in the place of wall partitions allow a continuous change in the size of the enclosure and catalysing connections between different age groups. All rooms should be bathed in ample daylight, retaining a sense of familiarity with the outer world while creating a healthy and positive learning environment. A full wall in each classroom can be dedicated to storage, blackboards, sinks, etc., to create safe and frisky open spaces devoid of hard surfaces or edges. Designing spaces for schools with friendly materials to encourage early adoption of aesthetics results in creating tailor-made spaces that include soft furniture to maximise comfort, flexibility and safety, making learning a breeze.

The writer is Founder and Design Ideator, Studio IAAD.

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A balancing act

The year's fiscal deficit target seems achievable despite a spike in February

The Centre's fiscal deficit, or the gap between the Union Government's receipts and expenditure, has widened sharply from about ₹11 lakh crore by January to ₹15 lakh crore at the end of February. This represents the deficit moving up from 63.6% of the revised target of ₹17.3 lakh crore to 86.5% within 29 days. This is a significantly bumpier trajectory compared with last year – the deficit target was ₹17.55 lakh crore in 2022-23, it stood at 67.6% of target by January and reached 82.6% in February when the deficit rose ₹2.3 lakh crore. Eventually, last year's fiscal gap was ₹17.33 lakh crore, virtually the same as this year's goal. A couple of factors partially explain the February deficit spurt. One, the Centre transferred around ₹2.15 lakh crore to States through two instalments of their tax devolution share, as opposed to just ₹1.4 lakh crore last year. Second, capital expenditure which had slumped to ₹47,600 crore this January, was scaled up to ₹84,400 crore, over four times February 2023's capex outlay. Capex will have to further rise to ₹1.4 lakh crore in March to meet the government's ₹10 lakh crore target, but the implementation of the Model Code of Conduct for the Lok Sabha polls mid-way through the month could temper the number a bit.

As a proportion of GDP, the deficit last year stood at 6.4% and this year's original target was 5.9% that Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman revised to 5.8% in the interim Budget last month. The government has committed to narrow it to 4.5% of GDP by 2025-26, with a 5.1% target for 2024-25. This glide path may need some recalibration in the full Budget for the year after the general election, depending on the next government's priorities and the state of the economy over the current and next quarter. Having sought to prop up growth through public capex since the COVID-19 pandemic, the Centre is hoping private investment shifts to the driving seat, but high inflation, a bad monsoon and uneven consumption demand cloud those hopes. On the revenue spending front, the government still had ₹6 lakh crore of spending room available for March. Just three critical people-centric ministries – Agriculture, Rural Development and Consumer Affairs – still had over ₹1.03 lakh crore of firepower left for the last month of this fiscal despite their planned spends being revised in February. It is quite plausible that some Ministries will miss their targets and yield a positive surprise on the full-year deficit number. Tightening the belt is good for macroeconomic health, but persistently missing spending goals compromises intended outcomes and signals that there is scope to plan outlays better and borrow less in coming years.

Flight from fatigue

The DGCA must ensure regulatory norms are enforced for safety

The move by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) in January this year to introduce changes to flight duty time limitations (FDTL) would have been a much-needed regulatory step to address the industry issue of fatigue in a professional and scientific manner, or manage what crew call the burden of the red-eye flight. By dictating more rest time for pilots, redefining night duty and even directing airlines to file regular fatigue reports, the rules were to have been implemented no later than June 1. Instead, a large section of the managements of India's airlines, most in private hands, only saw red. In a discordant development this week, the DGCA quietly inked a copy of the revised Civil Aviation Requirements (CAR) which said that scheduled air transport operators 'may continue to operate in compliance with CAR Section 7 Series J Part III dated 24th April 2019 till approval of their respective scheme in compliance with this CAR'. Read in perspective, it meant this: airline economics had blanketed out safety. As highlighted in the media, a federation of Indian airlines had sought a postponement of the rules by pushing the line that the new norms would necessitate the hiring of between 15% to 25% more pilots over a 10-month period and could even result in a nearly 20% cancellation of flights during the peak summer season. But, as a number of aviation experts point out, with the DGCA now willingly lowering a safety net, pilots will continue to face fatigue-related issues.

In the early 1950s, recognising the need to limit flight and duty hours for the purpose of safety, the International Civil Aviation Organization established guidelines, under its Standards and Recommended Practices, which required the operator to ensure that fatigue did not endanger operations. Since then, the management of fatigue in the industry, especially in international operations, has evolved to include the adoption of Fatigue Risk Management Systems – which the DGCA is also planning – by tapping into scientific principles of fatigue management and aviation scheduling principles. The Indian aviation market, in the backdrop of a pilot shortage, is in high growth mode, and with increased flying flowing from an expanding route map, domestically and internationally, there are cases of the well-being of flight crew facing much stress. Ultra-long haul flying, with its own ecosystem of issues, is on the rise too with more widebody aircraft being inducted in India. Instead of taxiing back to holding point, the DGCA needs to demonstrate an independence where it will still ensure that regulatory norms are enforced and also aligned with the highest standards of safety, for flight crew and passengers deserve safer flying.

Bonds, big money and an imperfect democracy

Arun Kumar

is a retired professor of Economics at Jawaharlal Nehru University, and the author of 'Understanding the Black Economy and Black Money in India' (2017)

The electoral bonds scheme that has been declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of India, was supposed to end the financing of elections with black money. If this had happened, Indian politics would have been transformed with great benefit to the nation. After all, illegal finance results in the control of politics passing into its hands – and that subverts democracy. The electoral bonds made not an iota of difference to the way politics is conducted in India. Elections continue to be fought with an increasingly larger amount of illegal funds being spent by political parties and candidates.

Gap between the professed and the actual

The lesson is clear. If politics is undemocratic in content, no patchwork such as electoral bonds can make it democratic. Indian politics requires large sums of money since it has been largely hollowed out of its content and become formalistic. Elected leaders, mainly serving the interests of those who finance their elections, hardly represent the interests of their constituency. Vested interests, increasingly, have got themselves elected. What they profess and what they practice are different.

This gap between the professed and the actual undermines democracy since government is no longer an entity 'of the people, by the people and for the people'. The vast majority of people see that they hardly gain benefit from government policies while vested interests corner most of the gains from development. It is in the design of the policies – the packaging is cleverly done to make policies appear to be in the national interest. In fact, vested interests are defined as national interest. They take precedence over the interests of the marginalised sections.

For instance, if poverty, unemployment, ill health and poor educational standards persist, these are said to be natural and are left to market forces. Concessions are granted to businesses to provide these services through the market which results in the inability of the poor to afford them while simultaneously leading to growing disparities. Concessions also reduce the availability of resources with the public sector so that it is unable to provide these services at the requisite level. Inadequate public services hurt the interests of the marginalised sections. For instance, the recent Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) shows that 40% of children in the age group of 14 to 18 years are unable to read, write or do the level of math of standard two. They cannot acquire higher skills which could enable them to end their poverty. So, why does education not receive high priority? That is because in the top down model of development, resources are preempted by the elite.

Businesses, not satisfied with the gains that they make legally, resort to making them illegally using undeclared incomes which constitute the black economy. Illegality is systematic and systemic. But, that is only possible if policymaker and executive become party to the subversion of the systems. This is the triad that underlies black income generation.

It requires weak accountability by government personnel, which is at the root of the weakness of democracy in India and its hollowing out. This is reinforced by the broadly feudal mindset that is prevalent in society which leads to the individual's willingness to bow before authority rather than standing up to it. This is visible in the institutions that are supposed to uphold democracy.

In a well-functioning democracy, fighting an election would need neither extravagant funding nor electoral bonds to be bought in secrecy

Money and the election

Voting is often not based on a candidate's performance but on attributes such as caste, community and region. To win votes, political parties slice and dice the electorate along these lines. Vote banks are cultivated and the constituents bribed just prior to an election. Campaigning is conducted by paid workers and crowds are mobilised to attend rallies and meetings using money, transportation and food. Big rallies are held to overwhelm voters, for which posters and cutouts are required, musclemen hired and the media kept happy.

All this requires a lot of money – far more than the permitted election expenditure limit of ₹95 lakh for a big parliamentary constituency. People in the know say that it is more like ₹50 crore as the amount required. Thus, ₹49 crore a candidate has to be mobilised through illegal funds. Over and above this sum, a party spends large sums to organise its politics, run offices, and in mobilisation – again, most of it from illegal funds.

It is in this milieu that the electoral bonds scheme was introduced. The argument was that this scheme would enable political parties to get legitimate funds and that their dependence on illegal funds would decline. But, right from day one, the scheme drew criticism for being opaque since the electorate would not get to know who was financing a political party and why – for legitimate or illegal reasons. It enabled a bribe to be given in white for favours done. Since big sums could only be given by businesses and the rich, their influence and manipulations were expected to increase. The bonds could only be given to a political party and not to individuals. So, the individual continued to be in need of illegal funds. The party obtaining funds could use them for all kinds of purposes and not necessarily for elections, such as setting up offices or destabilising Opposition-led governments. Thus, the name electoral bonds was inappropriate.

Further, any amount of bribe could be given since the limit of 7.5% of profits was removed. Even loss-making firms could make a donation. Shell companies could be used, opening the door for foreign firms to make donations. Even though the bonds had to be encashed within 15 days, they could be traded for 14 days and then given to the intended party. So, the entity buying the bond may not be the entity making the donation. In this case, the trail of funds and the identity of the donor were obscured.

Many of the donors did not realise that their identity would be revealed were the judiciary to declare the electoral bonds scheme to be unconstitutional. Only the experienced ones covered their tracks by making donations through shell companies or in cash. Their names may never be known. Finally, the contributions through the black money route continue, remaining the major source of funding for political parties. In effect, the electoral bonds scheme was only an additional avenue for funds that political parties received.

Cronyism uncovered

Even though the electoral bonds formed a fraction of the total funding requirement of political parties, data now made available unravels the character of Indian politics and elections. The data show that funds were given to political parties: for favours from policymakers; to escape prosecution for wrong doing, and as investment for the future. Under the last category, even political parties not in power receive funds. The first category enables a business to receive favours such as manipulation of policy or preferred treatment in policy implementation as in for example needing environmental clearance or getting a contract.

The second category is one where there is arm-twisting. Given how complex rules are, some violation of rules can be detected and prosecution initiated by agencies such as the Enforcement Directorate. The case can then drag on so that the process becomes the punishment. There are businesses that cut corners and it is easy to have them under pressure. There may be businesses that pay money just to escape harassment. The data provided by the State Bank of India shows the *quid pro quo* in the case of some of the donations made. More analysis could expose the money trail and the link with policy manipulation. This will also expose the criminality.

In a well-functioning democracy, where the political leadership is accountable, fighting an election would need neither big funding nor electoral bonds to be bought in secrecy. There would be no need of having to spend more than the expenditure limits set.

The electoral bonds scheme only highlights the growing weakness of Indian democracy. It could have worked in an ideal situation but then it would not have been required. It seems to have been designed to weaken the Opposition and democracy.

The human-dog relationship, conflict and coexistence

Amshuman Dasarathy

is an Associate with Socratus, a think-tank

Krithika Srinivasan

is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Edinburgh

It seems that each news cycle brings with it a steady stream of gruesome, heart-wrenching stories that relate to human-street dog conflict. These are usually stories of people, often children, being attacked by street dogs, or of the mistreatment of dogs by humans. Familiar tropes such as "the dog menace" or "man's best friend" animate these discussions and capture public and media attention.

In turn, more complicated and nuanced accounts that pay fidelity to the socio-ecological complexity of human-dog relations remain ignored. How, then, can we resist these reactionary impulses and fruitfully build on the wealth of work in the fields of ecology, public health, canine ethology, and urban dynamics to come to a more sophisticated and integrated understanding of these issues?

Human-dog interactions

A starting point could be to appreciate that "newsworthy" incidents of dog biting, chasing, or mauling represent only a fraction of all human-dog interactions. Citizen-based research across various parts of India by ROH-Indies (University of Edinburgh), shows that a majority of people-dog interactions are mundane and unremarkable such as casual feeding, occasional petting and ignoring. While this is certainly not intended to downplay the gravity of conflict, it would pay to remind ourselves that extreme instances such as mauling cannot be taken to be representative of the overall human-dog relationship.

On the other side of the spectrum of opinions on human-dog co-existence is the equally problematic notion that dogs are inherently virtuous creatures who can do no wrong. Dogs, like all other animals, including human beings, are beings whose motivations cannot always be known to us. This means treating dogs as individuals with specific backgrounds and environments, rather than an undifferentiated population mass that is either good or bad.

Headline grabbing incidents of 'dog biting, chasing, or mauling' represent only a fraction of all human-dog interactions

The tragic passing of the high-profile businessman in Ahmedabad in October last year, and subsequent explosion of anti-dog sentiment in media and public discourse is an exemplary case in how this conflict can move to a different level.

It began with the supposed involvement of dogs that attacked him causing him to fall, to his affection for dogs, to the statement by the hospital that treated him, and, finally, statements by animal rights groups asking the media not to villainise dogs. Ultimately, it remains unclear how the incidents leading up to his fall panned out. Did the dogs chase him? Or were they barking at the sight of him fallen on the ground? The incident is an example of one where the same issues could come up again unless we pay due attention to the complexity of human-dog interactions in India.

Findings from a research study

Being mindful of these considerations which introduce different shades of grey can help us educate ourselves about the folly in holding black and white positions. Take for instance the arguments in favour of mass culling or the eradication of street dogs through other means such as confinement in 'shelters'. Culling is rarely an effective or workable solution to reduce conflict, and can be counterproductive, especially in the complex social and ecological conditions found in a place such as India.

A research study, 'Reorienting rabies research and practice: Lessons from India' published in the journal, *Nature* (2019), says, eradication can exacerbate the situation by triggering unpredictable ecological changes that may be unwelcome. In the United Kingdom, for instance, where street dogs were successfully eliminated through killing and removal, foxes have come to live in the ecological niches vacated by dogs in cities and towns. These foxes, and other animals such as gulls which occupy similar niches, are now considered by some as pests and a nuisance, even attracting controversy around suspected attacks on children – in effect, simply reproducing many of the same old problems. What this study shows is that the different issues – rabies, bites, public feeding, nuisance – associated with dogs may need different responses.

Local context, relevant actions

In the face of such complexity, our energies must be geared toward improving our understanding of the drivers of different types of conflict to develop suitable interventions, rather than relying on silver bullet solutions that are rarely successful in building healthy societies.

In other words, what we need is a range of actions that are tailored to local contexts. Our ongoing research shows that this will have to include measures such as ensuring ready access to post-exposure treatment and anti-rabies vaccination for people; prevention of relocation or removal of local dogs, which then triggers the influx of new dogs and associated conflict; maintenance of neutered, vaccinated and socialised street dog populations in their localities so as to reduce incidents of conflict (such as those seen in South Mumbai and parts of Chennai, Bengaluru and New Delhi); better solid waste management as a way to control the 'carrying capacity' of known flash points such as garbage dumps; and, very crucially, public education programmes to teach people, both adults and children, how to safely interact with dogs.

Our cities and villages have always been sites where different species live together, without either harmony or conquest. In this context, we would do well to approach problems of human-dog conflict as one among other civic issues relating to how we live and share spaces safely with others.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Comments from overseas

Should India adopt an unflappable attitude? I do not think so (Editorial, "Easily provoked, March 29). Any sovereign nation would indeed find it intolerable for another country to comment on its internal affairs. Irrespective of whether the government's actions are right or wrong, the United States holds no position to upbraid them.

Pratibha Sharma,
Chandigarh

The only quest

The first phase of the general election is drawing closer and it is an open secret that most politicians have only one burning desire — to be in power at any cost. How else does one explain politicians defecting from one party to another? Such politicians are neither truthful to the trust imposed in them by the innocent voter or to the parties under whose umbrella/banner they get elected.

How will the nation grow if politicians are blinded only by power?

Balasubramaniam Pavani,
Secunderabad

Wasted meals

As the world's population grows, our challenge should not be on how to grow more food but to reduce food loss in a sustainable way ("Households across the world waste 1 billion meals a day, says UN report", March 29). It is an immediate need if we are to maximise the food we produce and to feed more. There used to be a time when everything people could grow, such as banana or coconut, would be reused in some way. India needs a national mission to cut food wastage.

H.N. Ramakrishna,
Bengaluru

This is another global tragedy especially when a third of humanity faces food insecurity. As it is not a rich country problem alone, countries like India should avoid wastage by improving public-private partnerships and encouraging NGO participation.

Dr. Thomas Palocaren,
Vellore, Tamil Nadu

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address.

GROUND ZERO

The Matuas at Bongaon in North 24 Parganas district celebrate the Citizenship (Amendment) Rules. DEBASISH BHADURI

The conundrum of citizenship

The Matuas, who have migrated from Bangladesh to India over the years, possess Aadhaar cards and voter identity cards, yet believe that the Citizenship (Amendment) Rules are necessary. For years, the BJP and the Trinamool have been competing to win the support of the sect. **Shiv Sahay Singh** and **Varghese K. George** report on the confusion regarding identity and statehood in West Bengal

Sadananda Biswas, 68, from West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district, breaks down while recalling his childhood at Faridpur district in Bangladesh. "Our house was set on fire before my own eyes. We had to run away from Bangladesh with nothing but what we were wearing," he says. Now, 10 days after the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) notified the Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, 2024, Sadananda, who belongs to the Matua sect, is relieved that his long wait for 'authentic nationality' has finally come to an end.

The Matua sect comprising Namashudras or Dalits was set up by Harichand Thakur at Orakandi in Bangladesh in the mid-19th century, in order to question the practices of Brahminical Hinduism. Millions of Matuas have migrated to India both before and after the war in 1971 that liberated what was then East Pakistan from West Pakistan, laying the foundation of Bangladesh.

Wearing garlands of wooden beads, considered holy, around his neck, Sadananda stands outside the office of the All-India Matua Mahasangha, the headquarters of the Matua order, in Thakurnagar town in Bongaon. He has travelled about 35 kilometres from his village, Baghjhola, in Baduria, in preparation for the annual Matua mela, which was attended by about 20 lakh people last year. During the mela in April, the Matuas will offer prayers at the temple of Harichand Thakur and his wife Shantidevi, bathe in the nearby pond, and participate in *kirtan* (religious chanting and singing) for days.

Like the majority of the people from the Matua sect, Sadananda, a local trader of Ayurvedic medicines, has all the documents of Indian citizenship, including a voter identity card and Aadhaar. His older son is working in West Asia on an Indian passport. Yet, he believes that the Citizenship (Amendment) Rules are necessary. "It is not about what we get under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA). It is about not allowing Muslims to keep coming to India," he says. "We fled Bangladesh because of persecution. Now, you want us to allow them to follow us here?"

> We fled Bangladesh because of persecution. Now, you want us to allow them (Muslims) to follow us here?
>
> **SADANANDA BISWAS**
> Member, Matua sect

Hindu or Matua?

Sustained politics over many decades by the Sangh Parivar and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and now the CAA, 2019, and the Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, are nudging more people like Sadananda to think of their identity.

"India should be a Hindu Rashtra," contends Nipa Biswas, a woman in her 40s, who also hails from Baghjhola and has come with him to the headquarters of the Matua Mahasangha.

The same sentiment is echoed by Manoj Gosai, an office-bearer of the Mahasangha, who is busy issuing pink slips to people gathered for membership inside the office. "You know everything but you want me to say it. Muslims have not faced any religious persecution in the countries mentioned in the CAA. That is why the law does not allow them citizenship," says Manoj, who sports a white beard, a saffron towel, and a garland of wooden beads.

The CAA, which was passed by Parliament on December 11, 2019, facilitates citizenship to undocumented migrants belonging to six non-Muslim communities – Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi or Christian – from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, who entered India on or before December 31, 2014. The Citizenship (Amendment) Rules were notified on March 11, 2024, coinciding with the birth anniversary of the founder of the Matua sect.

For Sadananda and Manoj, the CAA and the subsequent Rules are about establishing their identity and keeping Muslims at bay. However, they have no clear answers as to whether they consider themselves Hindu or Matua.

"I am a Matua first. But my religion is Sanatana Dharma. It is not a question of religion but identity. There are more than 3 crore Matuas across India," says Manoj. Others around him are not sure where they stand.

Sadananda says he lives his life according to the teachings of Harichand Thakur. "I am a Matua first and a Hindu later. We may be Hindus by religion, but Matua is our sect. For us, Harichand Thakur and Guruchand Thakur (son of Harichand Thakur) are our gods. Our prayers are answered here. Why should we not believe in them," he says.

Sadananda Biswas, a resident of Baduria in North 24 Parganas, believes that the Citizenship (Amendment) Rules are necessary. DEBASISH BHADURI

Applying for citizenship

The Matus are euphoric over the CAA Rules being notified, but they are also confused about how to apply for citizenship. Drigen Biswas, a BJP booth president from Gopalganj in Bongaon, has been going around the office of the All-India Matua Mahasangha asking whether camps will be set up to help people fill in the CAA forms.

"Since the government wants us to apply, we will do so. But we will need a little help. We do not have the documents that the portal is asking for," he says. However, Drigen emphasises that the CAA will help the BJP in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

The Citizenship (Amendment) Rules specify several documents that are to be uploaded on an online portal (indiancitizenshiponline.nic.in/) in order to process the application. A sworn affidavit declaring the country of origin and date of entry into India along with an eligibility certificate to be issued by a locally reputed community institution certifying that a person follows one of the six faiths are mandatory.

Manoj says the process of filling in the forms should be simplified. "The Rules are welcome, but it is not possible for people who have been persecuted on religious lines to provide documents relating to their residence in another country," he says.

Sadananda says there are about 25-30 families from Bangladesh residing for decades at Baghjhola. All of them, too, are not sure how to apply for fresh citizenship through the MHA portal. "If the government wants us to apply through the portal, we will. But at this moment, how to apply is not our concern," he says.

Reaching out to the Matuas

The Rules have been the subject of debate, discussion, and also confusion in the political circles of West Bengal. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who reacted soon after the Rules were notified, said that Matuas will become refugees the moment they apply on the portal. "Those who are being asked to apply... the moment they apply, from becoming citizens they will become illegal refugees. What will happen to your properties, your jobs, and the studies of your children? Everything will be declared illegal," she said, while addressing a gathering on March 12 at Habra, located 15 km from Thakurnagar.

Bongaon BJP MP and Union Minister of State for Shipping and Waterways Shantanu Thakur, who hails from the family of the founders of the Matua sect, emphasised that the CAA is necessary. Hindu refugees from Bangladesh will have to suffer a fate like the Rohingya if they do not apply through the MHA portal, he said. "In future, if there is a government that says as per the law, those who have entered the country after 1971 are not citizens and they and their children will be identified and driven out, can Mamata Banerjee save them? The Rohingya have been driven out. Has she been able to do anything," he asked.

The Minister added he would apply for citizenship under the CAA to counter the "false propaganda" of the Trinamool. While BJP leaders have maintained that the CAA and the Rules are not meant to take away anyone's citizenship, Banerjee said that the CAA will lead to a National Register of Citizens (NRC), like in Assam, and the establishment of "concentration camps".

The Matua community has a considerable influence not only in the Bongaon Lok Sabha constituency, but also in nearly half a dozen Lok Sabha seats in areas bordering West Bengal and Bangladesh. Both the BJP and the Trinamool are trying to win the support of the community.

> Wherever our MP (Shantanu Thakur) used to go, he would face the same question (When will the Rules be framed). Now, we will win.
>
> **DEBABAS MONDAL**
> BJP president of the Bongaon organisation district

Kapil Krishna Thakur, an author and social worker who has worked with the Matuas for decades, says the sect, which was mostly a reform movement, has now been appropriated by the larger Hindutva fold. "Upper caste Bengalis came from Bangladesh before 1947-48. The Matuas, who were dependent on land and agriculture, came to India at a much later date," he points out.

For more than five years, the Matuas have been at the centre of the BJP's politics around the CAA. Prime Minister Narendra Modi began his campaign for the 2019 Lok Sabha polls in West Bengal by addressing a gathering at Thakurnagar. On March 27, 2021, the first day of polling for the State Assembly polls, he was at Orakandi in Bangladesh, the birthplace of Harichand Thakur.

The Trinamool Congress has not lagged behind. It recently nominated Mamatabala Thakur, the aunt of BJP MP Shantanu Thakur, to the Rajya Sabha. The party has also fielded Biswajit Das, a BJP legislator who defected to the Trinamool and has significant influence over Matua votes, to contest against Shantanu Thakur from the Bongaon Lok Sabha seat.

Debabas Mondal, the BJP president of the Bongaon organisation district, admits that the delay in framing the Rules had put the party in a difficult position. "Wherever our MP (Shantanu Thakur) used to go, he would face the same question (When will the Rules be framed?) Now, we will definitely win," he says.

As far as the issue of applying for citizenship on the portal is concerned, the BJP leader says the people are not "getting a proper way to apply". He explains that people will not require all the documents. "Any one of the documents will be enough," he says. On being asked why people who are already citizens and are availing themselves of all the privileges as citizens need to apply for citizenship, Debdas says, "It will wipe out the stigma that they are refugees."

Recently, *The Hindu* reported that a local priest may issue an "eligibility certificate" under the CAA to validate the religion of an applicant. Many in the Matua community feel that the membership cards issued by the All-India Matua Mahasangha may be used as a document to apply through the MHA portal. However, there are no reports of people applying for citizenship under the CAA through the portal. While there is a rush for membership cards, Krishna Thakur says leaders of the sect have discouraged their supporters from filling any form through the portal.

Fear and apprehension

Krishna Thakur believes that more than the issue of citizenship, the attempt to divide people on religious grounds is becoming more pronounced through the CAA and the Rules. He also questions the claims that everyone who crossed the border was persecuted along religious lines. "When the country (Pakistan) was partitioned, it was a matter of right (of rehabilitation) for those who had come (to India) from East Pakistan. Now, the CAA narrative has shifted from the rights-approach to giving something to a guest or outsider," he says.

While fear and apprehension have prevailed among different sections of people who have come from Bangladesh to India, there were no incidents of violence. However, when the CAA was passed in Parliament in 2019, the State witnessed arson and violence across several districts.

Mir Abdul Hashem, a trader from Bongoan, who exports and imports goods between Bangladesh and India, believes that the exercise is to target Muslims. "No one is a fool. The exercise is to create fear and panic among Muslims. We need to understand why the Rules were announced before the elections," he says. Muslims form 27.01% of the population of West Bengal.

The confusion surrounding the CAA is not limited to Bongoan. On March 21, a 31-year-old man in Kolkata died by suicide in south Kolkata's Netaji Nagar. His family members alleged that he was panic-stricken about the CAA and the new Rules. Netaji Nagar is among the many colonies in Kolkata where people from Bangladesh have settled over the last few decades. In a complaint letter to the Netaji Nagar police station, Tapan Sengupta, the man's father, wrote, "Since the announcement of the CAA, my son has been suffering from tremendous mental trauma and agony." The Trinamool leadership sent a five-member delegation to the house of the deceased and said that the Rules were creating panic.

Bibhas Chandra Saha, 77, a retired government employee, has been restless since the Rules were notified. He fears that he does not have the relevant documents to apply for citizenship. "Unlike many who stayed in refugee colonies, I stayed at the house of a relative in Jalpaiguri when I entered the country in 1964. I have a letter from the District Magistrate, but I don't think that will work," he says. Saha is not sure whether he should apply for citizenship or just wait and watch. "After so many years of staying in the country, applying for citizenship afresh is nothing but harassment," he contends.

Even if the lakhs of people like Saha who came from Bangladesh and settled in West Bengal decide whether they want to apply for citizenship or not, they have little clarity on the process, and whether the State government can stop it or slow it down. The Trinamool government has ruled out any need to apply for new citizenship under the CAA. As a result, there is no infrastructure in the State to help the people. As the political temperatures rise with the Lok Sabha polls drawing near, the CAA and the Rules pose more questions than answers for the people.

shivsahay.s@thehindu.co.in

**Those who require assistance for overcoming suicidal thoughts may contact ElloMind +91-1800-599-0019*

From Page One

Seat-sharing deal announced in Bihar

The Begusarai seat has gone to the Communist Party of India (CPI) amid speculations that Congress leader and former Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU) president Kanhaiya Kumar would be fielded there.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha poll, Mr. Kumar, a CPI candidate then, was defeated in Begusarai by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate Giriraj Singh by over two lakh votes. Mr. Kumar later joined the Congress party.

Meanwhile, All India Majlis-E-Ettehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) has announced that they will contest 16 seats in Bihar and give support to Hina Sahab from Siwan. She is the wife of the late strongman of Siwan Mohd. Shahabuddin, who had represented Siwan in the Lok Sabha four times.

RJD sources told *The Hindu* that under *mahagathbandhan* alliance, the party would get one more seat in the neighbouring State of Jharkhand. The RJD, which had already been allocated the Chatra constituency in the State, is now likely to get the Palamu seat as well, he added.

Congress accuses BJP of turning to 'tax terrorism'

Taking to social media platform X, senior party leader Rahul Gandhi warned that when the government changes, there would be strict action against all those who assaulted democracy.

"Such action will be taken that none will dare to do all this again. This is my guarantee," Mr. Gandhi said in a post.

Mr. Ramesh said that the BJP had collected ₹8,200 crore through the "electoral bonds scam". "The BJP believes in one nation and no election," he said, adding, "We will not be scared of these notices. We will be more aggressive and fight these polls." He added that the ruling party wanted to deny a level playing field to others.

Hearing on April 1

The Congress treasurer said that they had moved the Supreme Court and the case relating to the ongoing tax dispute has been listed for hearing on April 1. Asked about the United States government taking note of Congress's financial troubles, Mr. Maken said "this is an internal matter and the Constitution empowers us to take on the BJP".

He alleged that the Congress and other like-minded Opposition parties are being selectively targeted by the I-T department, which he alleged, is functioning as the BJP's "frontal organisation" .Though he didn't reveal the name of the other parties, sources said the CPI(M) and the CPI had also received notices from I-T department.

The income tax returns filed by the Congress for eight years have been reopened on "baseless and manufactured" grounds to levy illegal I-T demand orders totalling thousands of crores of rupees, Mr. Maken said. "These orders are based on manufactured and planted diaries and so-called raids by the BJP's frontal organisation on third parties. Several of these raided third parties enjoy stay orders from courts based on vitiated search procedures by the I-T department," Mr. Maken claimed, adding that the same interim relief is not being granted to the Congress.

"Why have the BJP or its alliance partners not been dealt with similarly? Why has the I-T department not taken cognisance of the Yediyurappa diaries, Jain diaries, Sahara diaries, Birla diaries, Bangaru Lakshman convictions and penalised BJP?" he added.

'Discussed peace formula with India'

Since the beginning of the crisis, India has maintained contact with both Ukraine and Russia as well as other stakeholders. On March 16, National Security Adviser Ajit Doval spoke with Andriy Yermak, head of the office of the Ukrainian President, which was followed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's telephonic conversation with President Vladimir Putin in Moscow and President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kyiv.

The mention of the peace formula by Mr. Kuleba has attracted attention as a 'Global Peace Summit' aiming to end the stalemated conflict is expected to meet soon in Switzerland. Mr. Kuleba had earlier called upon India to participate in the summit along with other major countries in the world. Prospects of the summit, however, received a jolt with Russian Foreign Ministry's spokesperson Maria Zakharova dismissing the possibility of Moscow's participation in the Switzerland-led peace talks.

The Ukraine's President had presented a 10-point peace plan in 2022 during the G-20 summit in Bali. That plan which called for "complete withdrawal of Russian forces from the 1991 borders", was rejected immediately by Moscow. Russia feels that Mr. Zelenskyy's peace formula does not take the Russian concerns into consideration.

It is expected that the Swiss-backed peace process may help finding a solution between the two positions. Diplomatic sources however could not confirm when precisely the Swiss would host the event, indicating that hectic talks are on at various levels. The Indian side did not elaborate on what the Ukrainian peace formula was, but mentioned that Friday's exchange included "a comprehensive discussion on the ongoing conflict and efforts to achieve a peaceful settlement."

Fulfil tax obligations, BJP tells Congress

Congress's charge of 'tax terrorism' shows its frustration... all tax authorities as well as Delhi HC have rejected party's arguments, says BJP, adding that the I-T dept. had found unaccounted for cash transactions and unfiled returns by the Congress, during a probe based on seized documents

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Friday said the Congress's accusations that the Modi government was indulging in "tax terrorism" – after that party received multiple notices from the Income Tax Department – "reveals its frustration".

Addressing a press conference at the BJP's national headquarters, party spokesperson Syed Zafar Islam said the Congress had "failed to follow the correct procedures for filing taxes or making appeals".

Mr. Islam said authorities, ranging from the Commissioner of Income Tax to the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal and even the Delhi High Court, "have upheld the actions of the Income Tax Department while dismissing the Congress's arguments".

"Instead of engaging in media rhetoric, the Congress should adhere to legal processes and fulfil its tax obligations," Mr. Islam said.

The Congress often invoked "threats to democracy" when faced with allegations of fraud, the BJP said.

Fresh demands

Senior Congress leaders Jairam Ramesh and Ajay Maken had held a press conference earlier accusing the BJP-led government of "unleashing tax terrorism" after the I-T department made fresh demands amounting to ₹1,823 crore from the party.

> The High Court in its decision admitted that the department had sufficient and solid evidence for further probe under the I-T Act
>
> **SYED ZAFAR ISLAM**
> BJP spokesperson

Mr. Islam added that it was mandatory for any registered political party to file returns every year under the Income Tax Act section 13(A).

"However, the Congress has violated that condition and also misrepresented the income," he said.

He also pointed out that the I-T department had found unaccounted for cash transactions and unfiled tax returns by the Congress as well as unreported income, during its investigation based on seized documents. Consequently, the department issued recovery notices to the Congress, he said.

'Party ignored notices'

The Congress had at first "ignored" notices from the I-T department, Mr. Islam said, and later appealed to the Commissioner of Income Tax, but its arguments had been rejected. Subsequently, the party had approached the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT), where the Congress did not get relief. It then took the matter to the Delhi High Court on March 13, 2024, where too the Congress's petition against recovery proceedings was dismissed.

Mr. Islam mentioned that during the investigation, the department found that the Congress had violated the law in many financial years.

"The Congress again approached the Delhi High Court to quash the reassessment proceedings under Section 153C for all seven years from 2014 to 2021, which was rejected by the High Court. The High Court in its decision admitted that the department had sufficient and solid evidence for further investigation under the Income Tax Act. The High Court found that income worth hundreds of crores of rupees has been hidden," he said.

On the draw

MIKA AZIZI

Left parties too receive notices from I-T Dept. for tax violations

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Communist Party of India (CPI) reportedly has been served a notice by the Income Tax Department for violation of its procedures after two of its State units were found using old Permanent Account Number (PAN) cards for filing income-tax returns.

A *PTI* report quoting sources said that the department has asked the party to pay "dues" of ₹11 crore, though a top CPI leader stated the notice does not mention any sum. He further said that the party is consulting lawyers to challenge the notice.

The department in July 2022 had also served a notice to Communist Party of India (Marxist) withdrawing the tax exemption of the party for the year 2016-17 and taxed the Left party ₹15.59 crore for not declaring a bank account in its tax returns for the year. Sources said the CPI(M) had received the notice under Section 148A of the I-T Act.

The department passed an order under Section 148A(d) of the Act, rejecting the party's submissions, and reopened the case by issuing a notice under Section 148. The sources said the department has passed a final order and levied a tax of ₹15.59 crore.

They added that the CPI (M) had filed a writ petition against the order in the Delhi High Court. The court had issued a notice to the I-T department and directed it not to take any precipitate action, the sources said.

(With inputs from PTI)

BJP using NIA to target our leaders, says Trinamool

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress on Friday alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidates contesting the Lok Sabha polls were conspiring with the National Investigation Agency (NIA) to have certain leaders of the State's ruling party arrested ahead of the Lok Sabha election. Trinamool Congress spokesperson Kunal Ghosh said that two BJP candidates had held a meeting with the NIA officer in Kolkata regarding summons and arrest of Trinamool Congress leaders in Purba Medinipur district.

Referring to an NIA official, Mr. Ghosh asked on X whether two BJP leaders met the official and "handed over a list of @AITCofficial leaders and workers for immediate summon and arrest, or not".

The Trinamool Congress also asked "whether the NIA is planning for a raid and arrest some @AITCofficial workers tomorrow according to a list given by BJP or not". The allegations come at a time when the NIA has issued notice to eight persons to appear before the agency in connection with an explosion in Purba Medinipur district.

Purba Medinipur, where two seats – Kanthi and Tamluk – are up for grabs during the Lok Sabha polls, has emerged as a prestige contest between the BJP and the Trinamool.

During the day, a five-member Trinamool delegation approached the Election Commission and sought the poll body's intervention against the BJP's "continued misuse" of Central agencies.

Opposition parties in U.P. demand high-level inquiry into Ansari's death

Mayank Kumar
LUCKNOW

Top Uttar Pradesh Opposition leaders on Friday demanded a high-level investigation into the death of jailed gangster-turned-politician Mukhtar Ansari.

Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav called for an investigation under the supervision of a Supreme Court judge, and alleged that Uttar Pradesh was going through the worst phase of "government anarchy".

Ansari died of cardiac arrest on Thursday, within hours after he was rushed to the Rani Durgawati Medical College in Banda district, according to the hospital's medical bulletin.

Tight security: An ambulance carrying the mortal remains of Mukhtar Ansari leaves for his native place in Ghazipur, from a hospital in Banda on Friday. PTI

Son's allegation

Ansari's son, Umar Ansari, alleged that the 63-year-old five-time former MLA had died of "slow-poisoning" as a substance was mixed in food and given to him in the Banda jail. "My father wrote to courts and told that he was being subjected to 'slow poisoning', the entire country now knows about it," he said.

"It is the primary responsibility and duty of the government to protect someone's life in every situation and at every place. The death of a prisoner will erode public confidence in the judicial process," wrote SP president Akhilesh Yadav on X.

Four-time former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) president Mayawati demanded a high-level investigation in view of the serious allegation levelled by the family of the deceased.

"The persistent apprehensions and serious allegations made by Mukhtar Ansari's family regarding his death in jail require a high-level investigation so that the true facts of his death can be revealed. May nature give the family the strength to bear this sorrow," said Ms. Mayawati.

Prohibitory orders

Amid the news of Ansari's death and likely funeral on Friday in Ghazipur, his native place, shops remained closed in many towns in the State.

The police imposed prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the CrPC across the State following the death of the former MLA.

CJM of Banda district orders judicial probe

The Hindu Bureau
LUCKNOW

The Chief Judicial Magistrate (CJM) of Banda district in Uttar Pradesh on Friday ordered a judicial inquiry into the death of gangster-turned-politician Mukhtar Ansari. The court directed the Banda MP/MLA court judge, Garima Singh, to submit the report within a month.

Ms. Singh, who is the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate, will lead a three-member team entrusted to conduct the magisterial investigation.

Meanwhile, the post-mortem examination was conducted by a panel of five doctors at the Banda Medical College and the body was handed over to the family. The last rites will be held at Kalibag graveyard in Ghazipur district.

A medical bulletin from Rani Durgawati Medical College said Ansari had died of cardiac arrest.

Moment law takes its course, they take to the streets, says Dhankhar

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

In an apparent swipe at the Opposition for rallying behind beleaguered Delhi Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party leader Arvind Kejriwal, Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Friday pointed out how one breaking the law was playing the victim card.

Mr. Kejriwal was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate on March 21 in a money laundering case linked to Delhi's scrapped excise policy. Addressing an event at the Indian Institute of Public Administration, the Vice-President said the law was holding them accountable.

"Some people think they are above law, immune from the law. That has been demolished... those who think are beyond law, the law is after them," Mr. Dhankhar said, though he refrained from naming any person.

But leaving no doubt that his remarks were aimed at the Opposition, who have organised a public meeting at the Ramlila Maidan on Sunday to protest against Mr. Kejriwal's arrest, he said, "But what do we see – the moment law takes its course, they take to the streets, high decibel debates, camouflaging culpability of the worst nature by human rights. This is happening under our nose."

He asked as to what was the justification for persons or organisations to take to the streets when law was set in motion.

'People being jailed for criticising govt.'

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Expressing concern over the "prolonged incarceration" of a large number of writers, journalists, and social activists for criticising the Indian government, a group of eminent personalities have sought to draw the world's attention to how India's "democratic tradition is being fundamentally undermined".

In a joint statement, they pointed out how individuals are jailed "often without so much as a chargesheet against them".

Novelist Amitav Ghosh, literary theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Professor Akeel Bilgrami, and Professor Sheldon Pollock are among those who signed the statement on the undermining of elementary freedoms in India.

In a separate statement, Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen expressed his "sense of indignation at this basic violation of human freedom in my own country".

INDIA bloc leaders prepare for a big showdown tomorrow

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

This will be the first public meeting of the INDIA bloc leaders since the coalition was formed on June 23 last year in Patna

The Opposition is preparing for a big showdown on Sunday at the Ramlila Maidan in Delhi, where the INDIA bloc is scheduled to hold a rally to protest against Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's arrest by the Enforcement Directorate. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, former president Rahul Gandhi, and top leaders of 11 Opposition parties have confirmed their presence at the event.

This will be the first public meeting of the INDIA bloc leaders since the coalition was formed on June 23 last year in Patna. The alliance in September last year had announced a public rally in Bhopal coinciding with the Madhya Pradesh Assembly election, but that never materialised. The more recent efforts – one in Patna after the Rashtriya Janata Dal's Jan Vishwas Rally last month and the March 17 rally in Mumbai at the close of Mr. Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra, saw only scant presence from the Opposition ranks.

Trinamool Congress, which refused to cede any seat to the Congress, will also be seen at the event. Trinamool Rajya Sabha leader Derek O'Brien will be representing his party. Jharkhand Chief Minister Champai Soren, Nationalist Congress Party patriarch Sharad Pawar, former Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, and former Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav have confirmed their presence. The Left will also be present in full force.

The general secretaries of four left parties – the CPI(M), the CPI, the CPI (ML), and the Forward Bloc will take part in the event. The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam will be represented by the party's Rajya Sabha leader Tiruchi Siva.

Congress unhappy with RJD over seat division in Bihar

The party, many feel, should have negotiated for more and better seats; Pappu Yadav, who joined the Congress recently and was eyeing the Purnia seat, hints at the possibility of a 'friendly fight'

Sobhana K. Nair
Sandeep Phukan
NEW DELHI

With the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) keeping the Purnia Lok Sabha seat for itself following the seat-sharing arrangement in Bihar, the Congress has been left with a tricky situation in the form of former MP Rajesh Ranjan, alias Pappu Yadav.

The party also has to contend with furious State leaders who feel that it is settling for too little.

The Congress has got nine out of the 40 Lok Sabha seats in the State. In a majority of these seats, State leaders claim, it has a nominal presence, with the caste arithmetic leaning in favour of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance.

With regard to Purnia, the RJD's decision to stick with its candidate, Bima Bharti, who switched over from the Janata Dal (U), is being seen as a direct snub to the Gandhis who brought Mr. Pappu Yadav on board recently.

Congress leader Rajesh Ranjan, alias Pappu Yadav, has not announced yet whether he will contest as an Independent. PTI

Mr. Pappu Yadav has not announced yet whether he will contest as an Independent, but citing the example of Wayanad – where senior CPI leader Annie Raja is contesting against former Congress president Rahul Gandhi – hinted at the possibility of "friendly fights". Mr. Pappu Yadav, whose last electoral success came in 2014, when he won from Madhepura on RJD ticket, had represented Purnia thrice in the 1990s, two times as an Independent.

"I am committed to making Rahul Gandhi the country's Prime Minister and helping a Congress revival in Bihar where, five years from now, it will be a force to reckon with in all 40 Lok Sabha constituencies," Mr. Pappu Yadav said. His remark struck a chord with several Congress leaders, who feel short-changed.

'Weak State leadership'

The Congress, many feel, should have negotiated for more and better seats, since in a national election, it has better resonance than the RJD. "In Bihar, our party has surrendered to Lalu Prasad's whims and fancies. Our State leadership couldn't keep the party's interest as supreme while negotiating seats with the RJD and now our central leadership looks helpless," senior Bihar Congress leader Kishore Kumar Jha told *The Hindu*.

He said the seats where the Congress could have been stronger were given to the RJD by a "weak State leadership". Other than Kishanganj and Katihar, the Congress has not won the remaining seven in several decades. For example, in Muzaffarpur, the Congress last won in 1984 and the RJD in 1998. In Maharajganj, the Congress last won in 1984. The Patna Sahib seat has been with the BJP since 2009 and the Congress does not fancy its chances here. "I think Mallikarjun Khargeji and Rahul Gandhiji should call off these relations and go it alone instead of being in this insulting alliance," Mr. Jha said.

INBRIEF

Congress to unveil manifesto for Lok Sabha polls on April 5

The Congress is likely to release its manifesto for the Lok Sabha election on April 5. The party plans to follow it up with rallies and public meetings across the country, sources said on Friday. The first such public rally, in which former party chief Sonia Gandhi may participate, will be held in Rajasthan on April 6. Before the formal release of the manifesto, the Congress will launch the Ghar Ghar guarantee campaign on April 3. Through this campaign, the party plans to reach eight crore households with their 25 guarantees before the election.

Pathan removes photographs of World Cup-winning squad

Former cricketer and Trinamool Congress candidate from Baharampur, Yusuf Pathan, on Friday, began removing photographs of the Cricket World Cup-winning moment used by his supporters as campaign material in the Lok Sabha seat. The development comes after the West Bengal Congress lodged a complaint with the Election Commission (EC) accusing the former cricketer of violating the model code of conduct (MCC). In a letter to the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of the State, the West Bengal Congress unit demanded stern action against Mr. Pathan. Mr. Pathan is pitted against five-time Congress MP and State Congress president Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury.

Congress releases ninth list of five candidates for LS polls

The Congress on Friday released a list of five candidates for the Lok Sabha election. The party's ninth list included a change of nominees in two seats in Rajasthan. Former Union Minister C.P. Joshi, who was the Speaker of the previous Rajasthan Assembly before losing last year's Assembly election, has been fielded from Bhilwara in place of Damodar Gurjar. Mr. Gurjar has now been fielded from the Rajsamand Lok Sabha seat while the earlier announced candidate, Sudarshan Rawat, has been dropped. In Karnataka, Sunil Bose has been fielded from Chamarajanagar, while E. Thukaram will be the candidate from Bellary. Both seats are reserved seats, with the former reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the latter for the Scheduled Tribes.

Cong. seeks funds from shortlisted candidates

Satyasundar Barik
BHUBANESWAR

Facing fund shortage to meet election expenses, the Odisha unit of the Congress has asked candidates shortlisted for the Lok Sabha election to contribute ₹50,000 each to the party.

Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee president Sarat Pattanayak sent a letter to the probable candidates, inviting them to discuss strategies for their constituencies with the war-room members of Odisha Congress.

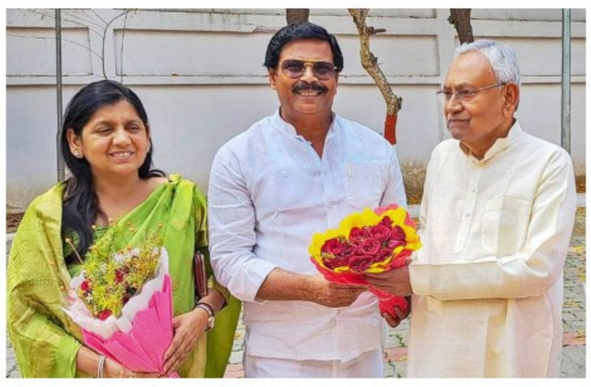
The Odisha Congress had invited applications from people who wanted to fight the Lok Sabha election. More than 3,000 aspirants had applied on a portal called 'Pragman'.

Senior Congress leader Panchanan Kanungo acknowledged that the party was seeking funds from shortlisted candidates. "There is nothing wrong in seeking funds from candidates especially when the Narendra Modi-led government has resorted to financial terrorism to cripple the Opposition...," said Mr. Kanungo.

"The party will decide on refunding the amount to candidates who do not make it to the final list," he added.

Wives help *bahubalis* of Bihar maintain poll grip

Amarnath Tewary
PATNA


Election allies: Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar with ex-MP Anand Mohan and former RJD leader Lovely Anand. PTI

Having weathered allegations, criminal cases and even long prison stints, Bihar's *bahubalis* (strongmen) are back in action in Bihar's politics. Like previous elections, their wives are in the fray, but voters clearly understand who's calling the shots.

Lovely Anand, wife of strongman Anand Mohan Singh; Bima Bharti, wife of Awadhesh Mandal; and Anita Mahto, wife of Ashok Mahto, are better known as *Mrs. Bahubalis*. Their husbands hold sway in their respective constituencies and beyond but cannot contest the poll directly owing to their criminal background and rules that prohibit convicts jailed for over two years from contesting elections "until six years after release". This is not too different from *mukhiapatis* (village head's husband) in Bihar reigning supreme at village panchayats with their elected wives (*mukhias)* watching from the sidelines.

Recently, convict and dreaded strongman of Nawada, Lakhisarai and Sheikhpura areas during 1990s and early 2000s, Ashok Mahto, 55, married Ms. Anita Mahto, 46, in the inauspicious period of *Kharwas*, just a day before she was given the ticket to contest the Lok Sabha election by Lalu Prasad-led Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD). Ms. Anita Mahto will contest from the Munger seat against Janata Dal (United) national president and close associate of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, Rajiv Ranjan alias Lalan Singh.

Ashok Mahto was released from jail in November last year after 17 years of imprisonment, and his hurried marriage just before the election reminded voters of a similar marriage in 2011, again in an inauspicious month. *Bahubali* Ajay Singh tied the knot with Kavita Singh ahead of the byelection to the Daraunda Assembly constituency necessitated by the demise of Ajay Singh's mother Jagmato Devi.

Similarly, RJD has fielded Ms. Bharti from the Purnia seat. Wife of Awadhesh Mandal, a feared don in Purnia and Kosi areas of north Bihar, Ms. Bharti will battle JD(U) candidate and sitting MP Santosh Kushwaha. Ms. Bharti has been a five-time MLA from Rupauli under Purnia Lok Sabha seat and also Minister in the State Cabinet.

On the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) front, JD(U) is fielding Ms. Lovely Anand, wife of strongman Anand Mohan Singh, from Sheohar Lok Sabha seat. Ms. Lovely Anand had been an MP (1994) and MLA twice. Her husband, convicted for the murder of former Gopalganj District Magistrate G. Krishnaiah in December 1994, had been MP twice from Sheohar in 1996 and 1998.

Assam district goes pink to encourage women voters

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

Women in Nalbari are being encouraged to vote in large numbers.

A district in western Assam has gone pink to make its women vote as much as or more than men.

Nalbari is among very few districts where almost all officers are women. Apart from District Commissioner and District Election Officer Varnali Deka and Superintendent of Police Supriya Das, they include the Deputy DEO, Finance and Accounts Officer, Treasury Officer, District Information and Public Relations Officer, and District Social Welfare Officer. The majority of the Additional Deputy Commissioners, Circle Officers, and Block Development Officers are women too. So are some 300 polling personnel covering three Assembly segments of the Barpeta Lok Sabha constituency.

Women in the district, however, have lagged in exercising their franchise.

"In the 2019 Lok Sabha election, our district recorded a turnout of 83.5%, higher than the State average of 81.5% and the national average of 67.18%. But the gap between men and women voters in Nalbari was wider than that at the national and State levels," Ms. Deka said.

In Nalbari, 84.4% of men voted compared with 82.4% of women, a gap of 2%.

The district officers and polling personnel have been taking up various Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) activities to encourage all sections to come and cast their votes.

The campaign entailed more than 300 women polling personnel and women officers turning up in *mekhela chador*, the traditional Assamese attire, in various hues of pink.

They held pink placards with various SVEEP messages urging unregistered people to apply for a voter card and others to assert their rights by casting their votes. This campaign will culminate with the "manning" of 50% of the district's urban polling stations by women.

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REQUEST FOR QUOTATION (RFQ) FOR EMPANELMENT OF DIFFERENT CATEGORY OF HOSPITALS / PATHOLOGICAL LABS / CLINICS / PHYSIOTHERAPY CENTERS

NIT Ref. No. :TNCC-021/2024 **Date: 15/03/2024**

NALCO invites RFQ from different medical centers for empanelment of different **category of Hospitals / Pathological Labs / Clinics / Physiotherapy Centers** etc. at Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Visakhapatnam, Kolkata, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Chennai, Bengaluru, New Delhi and NCR for provision of medical services to NALCO's employees and their dependents. RFQ document is available at the website: **www.nalcoindia.com** under Menu / Active Tender.

Last date for physical / postal submission of offer is : **22/04/2024** (by **03:00** PM).

Dy. General Manager (T&C), P&T

APPOINTMENT

सीडीएफडी
डी एन ए फ़िंगरप्रिंटिंग एवं निदान केन्द्र
(जैव प्रौद्योगिकी विभाग, विज्ञान एवं प्रौद्योगिकी मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार का स्वायत्त संस्थान)
CENTRE FOR DNA FINGERPRINTING AND DIAGNOSTICS
(an autonomous institute of the Dept. of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science & Technology, Govt. of India) Inner Ring Road, Uppal, Hyderabad - 500 039, Telangana, India **दूरभाष / Tel:** +91-40-2721 6199
फैक्स / Fax: +91-40-2721 6006 **वेबसाईट / Website:** http://www.cdfd.org.in

PH.D.- 2024-II ADMISSIONS

The Centre for DNA Fingerprinting and Diagnostics, Hyderabad, invites applications from highly motivated candidates for admission to its Ph.D. - 2024-II. Keeping in view the interdisciplinary nature of modern biology, we especially encourage persons from diverse backgrounds to apply. Those admitted as Research Scholars would be encouraged to register under the Ph.D. program of Manipal Academy of Higher Education or Regional Centre for Biotechnology.

Eligibility Criteria:

To be eligible, a candidate must have:

1. A Master's degree in any branch of Science, Technology, or Agriculture from a recognized University / Institute OR MBBS. **Candidates who have appeared for their final semester examination, but are awaiting results, are also eligible to apply.**
2. Qualified for a Junior Research Fellowship from CSIR / UGC / DBT / ICMR / INSPIRE / JEST / UGC - RGNF or any other similar examination with fellowship.
   *Candidates having qualified for Project - JRF under the ICMR funded project Scheme [which is only for a period of two years] OR DBT JRF NET with a B.Tech. [Biotechnology] degree OR DBT JRF NET under DBT - category – II list OR LS-NET qualification only in CSIR-UGC (NET) examination are **NOT** eligible.*

(Please see CDFD website (https://www.cdfd.org.in) for details).

Selection Procedure

Admission to the CDFD - Ph.D.-2024-II will be based on an **interview via video conference** scheduled to be held in end of May / beginning of June, 2024. The candidates should be available for more than one round of interviews, spread over a week, if needed.

(Please see CDFD website (http://www.cdfd.org.in) for details).

Interested candidates who fulfill the above conditions may register their names for **Ph.D.- 2024-II** by applying in the prescribed application form online. The link for the application form is available at **http://www.cdfd.org.in**

The Online facility of application will be closed on **April 24, 2024.**

Visit the CDFD website http://www.cdfd.org.in for detailed advertisement / General terms and conditions.

BJP's Rajkot candidate faces wrath of Kshatriyas over remarks

Mahesh Langa
AHMEDABAD

The Kshatriya community continued its protests against the BJP candidate from Rajkot, Parshottam Rupala, for his controversial remarks against its members.

On Friday, protests were held at around a dozen places in Saurashtra and north Gujarat, with members of different Kshatriya castes demanding that his candidature be withdrawn.

The Union Minister, during an election campaign speech on March 22, said that erstwhile '*maharajas*' (Kshatriya kings) had succumbed to foreign rulers like the British and forged family bonds with them. Princely families broke bread with the British rulers and also married their daughters to them, he said. Mr. Rupala then praised a Dalit community saying it had not bowed down before the British regime.

In Gujarat, there were hundreds of small princely families before Independence.

His speech, which went viral on social media, offended the Kshatriya or Rajputs in Saurashtra and parts of north Gujarat with significant hold of different castes of the erstwhile ruling class. In Saurashtra alone, the BJP has half a dozen MLAs and MPs from the Kshatriya community.

Parshottam Rupala

Minister apologises

After the initial protests, the Union Minister apologised, but various caste groups and outfits like the Karni Sena have intensified their protests by holding group meetings and burning his effigy and posters.

"We will not call off the protests till he is removed from the candidate list," the Karni Sena said.

P.T. Jadeja, the international president of the Rajput Yuva Sangh, told pressmen in Rajkot on Thursday that the BJP should withdraw Mr. Rupala as its candidate as a precondition for any talks for a compromise.

After the remarks triggered widespread outrage, the State BJP roped in former Gondal MLA Jayrajsinh Jadeja to talk to the community leaders and resolve the situation even as Mr. Rupala has remained silent over the issue after his apology.

Cheap statements: AAP

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Yuvrajsinh Jadeja urged the community not to compromise with Mr. Rupala who had lowered the image of the community by making "cheap remarks".

State Congress president Shaktisinh Gohil also lambasted the Union Minister and said he "lacked any understanding or knowledge to speak about" the community.

At a rally on Thursday, a member of the Kshatriya community said: "Our forefathers had fought Mughals and other invaders and made sacrifices. Can he [Rupala] name one person from his family who died fighting invaders? Rupala should read history before displaying his utter ignorance."

A senior BJP leader from Saurashtra said Mr. Rupala's remarks had unnecessarily created a political issue in the run-up to the election.

The Chief Electoral Officer of Gujarat, P. Bharathi, sought a report from the Rajkot District Collector on the Minister's speech.

INBRIEF

10 killed in road accident in J&K; PM announces ex gratia

Ten passengers were killed when a vehicle plunged into a deep gorge on the Jammu-Srinagar national highway on Friday. Officials said the passenger taxi rolled down a deep gorge near the Battery Chashma area in the Ramban district in a pre-dawn accident. The area was witnessing a major rainfall when the taxi rolled down around 300 meters, officials said. Officials could not immediately confirm the exact cause of the accident. Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed grief over the accident. He announced ex-gratia of two lakh rupees from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund to the next of kin of each deceased.

Tripura Bar Council to launch drive to identify fake lawyers

The Bar Council of Tripura has announced plans to conduct a survey in order to identify and remove fake lawyers from the State. A senior council member on Friday said that they have reached out to all bar associations in the State requesting a list of advocates, who claimed to have obtained their law degree after 1990. The decision was announced amid concerns that some individuals may have obtained their degree through corrupt means and falsely enrolled in the Bar Associations. The deadline for submitting the list is April 15.

Notify norms to make movies accessible to disabled persons: HC

Court directs I&B Ministry to notify the guidelines by July 15; the order came on a petition by four persons with visual and hearing disabilities

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has given the Centre time till July 15 to notify the guidelines for making films accessible to persons with hearing and visual disabilities.

The court said accessibility was enforceable as a legal right and that even private parties have to take reasonable measures to enable greater accessibility for persons with hearing and visual disabilities.

The court observed that the Information and Broadcasting Ministry has framed draft guidelines for accessibility standards in cinema halls for persons with hearing and visual disabilities and is in the process of finalising the same.

"The guidelines shall now be finalised by the Ministry and shall be notified on or before July 15, 2024. It is made clear that the said guidelines shall make the provision of accessibility features mandatory and provide a reasonable period for compliance by all stakeholders, in an expeditious manner," the court ordered.

Mandatory provision: The Delhi High Court said accessibility was enforceable as a legal right. FILE PHOTO

The court's order came on a petition by four persons with visual and hearing disabilities who sought directions on making films accessible to them. They argued that though various rights have been recognised for "persons with disabilities" under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, most films which are released in India do not cater to disabled persons despite the statute having been enacted more than five years ago.

The Ministry had issued various directions to the film producers' association and to the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) in October 2019, to use audio description and subtitles and closed captions in all films.

Celebratory firing at weddings is a recipe for disaster, says SC

A man was fatally shot in the neck by a fellow guest at a wedding in U.P.

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court, in a judgment, has highlighted the often disastrous consequences of "uncontrolled and unwarranted" celebratory firing at weddings, including the maiming or loss of innocent lives.

This is the second time in as many years the court has raised its voice against the culture of gun-toting bravado.

In February 2023, the court had condemned the easy availability and possession of guns, mostly country-made or unlicensed, in States like Uttar Pradesh as a feudal practice that cocks a snook at a very basic fundamental right – the right to life – guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution.

Recently, the court again came across the case concerning the death of man who was fatally shot in the neck by a fellow guest at a wedding in 2016.

"The act of celebratory firing during marriage ceremonies is an unfortunate yet prevalent practice in our nation. The present case is a direct example of the disastrous consequences of such uncontrolled and unwarranted celebratory firing," a Bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Satish Chandra Sharma observed.

The shooter, Shahid Ali, was sentenced to life imprisonment for murder. The Allahabad High Court had dismissed his appeal, and he had approached the Supreme Court for reprieve.

Justice Sharma, who authored the judgment, found him guilty of culpable homicide, but not murder.

The top court concluded there had been no previous enmity between Ali and the man who died. Only a single bullet had been fired. The man had died instantly.

The court ordered Ali to be released forthwith. He had already served eight years of his sentence.

Last year, the court had similarly expressed its distress at the large number of cases concerning the possession and use of illegal guns in Uttar Pradesh.

Manipur govt. assures HC of aid to UPSC aspirants

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has accepted the Manipur government's assurance to extend financial assistance to candidates from the hill districts who have opted for centres outside the strife-torn State for the Civil Services (Preliminary) Examination, 2024.

The government's assurance came in response to a plea by the Zomi Student Federation seeking to set up examination centres in the hill districts of Manipur.

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), which organises the exam, handed over an affidavit filed by the Manipur government, expressing its inability to open examination centres in Churachandpur and Kangpokpi districts.

The UPSC said candidates from the hill districts who have at present opted for Imphal as their examination centre can choose any of the following centres – Aizawl (Mizoram), Kohima (Nagaland), Shillong (Meghalaya), Dispur (Assam), Jorhat (Assam), Kolkata (West Bengal), and Delhi.

IMA releases charter of demands from doctors

Bindu Shajan Perappadan
NEW DELHI

The Indian Medical Association (IMA) will engage with political leaders to put across its communities' demands for the upcoming election, with the doctors demanding that the Centre help them maintain the "purity of modern medicine, to bring in strict measures to protect medical staff while on duty, reduce GST burden on healthcare products, and insurance, and exempt small and medium hospitals up to 50 beds and clinics from the Clinical Establishments (Registration and Regulation) Act, 2010."

The association has released its charter of demands and has asked local branches to engage with political leaders to "educate them about the needs of the community," said its national president R.V. Asokan.

Delaying new duty norms hampers air safety: pilots' body

Jagriti Chandra
NEW DELHI

The aviation safety regulator's decision to defer the implementation of new pilot rest and duty norms indefinitely "endangers pilot safety and safety of passengers", a nationwide body of pilots has said in its letter to the government.

The new rules were framed following concerns over mounting fatigue among pilots.

They provided enhanced rest by raising the weekly rest from 36 hours to 48 hours and curtailing night-time flying, which is known to impact alertness levels and crew performance, among other measures.

Safety of passengers

"The action of the DGCA not only endangers pilot safety but also undermines the safety of passengers which the implementation of revised CAR (Civil Aviation Requirement or rules) could prevent," the Federation of Indian Pilots (FIP) has said in its letter to the Ministry of Civil Aviation and the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Thrusday.

The FIP underlines that the commercial interests of airlines should not surpass the health and safety of pilots.

The pilots' body was referring to the amendment of March 26 to the new pilot duty and rest norms notified in January, following which the regulator removed the June 1 deadline for implementing the rules. The modification allows airlines to follow the old 2019 duty and rest norms for pilots "till approval of their respective scheme" in conformity with the new rules, and does not provide a specific time frame for implementation.

Indian Navy seizes hijacked Iranian vessel, rescues crew

Dinakar Peri
NEW DELHI

Indian Navy ships *Sumedha* and *Trishul* intercepted and freed a hijacked Iranian fishing vessel (FV), *Al-Kambar,* after forcing the pirates to surrender, the Navy said late on Friday.

"After more than 12 hours of intense coercive tactical measures as per the Standard Operating Procedures, the pirates on board [the] hijacked FV were forced to surrender. The crew, comprising 23 Pakistani nationals, have been safely rescued," a Navy spokesperson said. "Indian Naval specialist teams are presently undertaking thorough sanitisation and seaworthiness checks of the FV in order to escort her to a safe area for resuming normal fishing activities."

Al-Kambar was approximately 90 nautical miles southwest of Socotra when it was reportedly boarded by nine armed pirates. The Navy spokesperson said that based on inputs of a potential piracy incident on Thursday, two Indian Navy ships, deployed in Arabian Sea for maritime security operations were diverted. *INS Sumedha* intercepted *Al-Kambar* during early hours of Friday and was joined subsequently by guided missile frigate *INS Trishul*.

Rescue mission: Iranian fishing vessel *Al-Kambar*, which was reportedly boarded by nine armed pirates. @indiannavy/X

This is the latest in a series of incidents of piracy in the Arabian Sea and off Somalia in the past few months. As reported by *The Hindu* earlier this week, the pirate mother vessel that was used to hijack Malta-flagged merchant vessel *MV Ruen* on December 14 was itself an Iranian fishing vessel. *Al Ashkaan* with 24 Pakistani crew members was hijacked earlier by seven Somali pirates on November 29 near Socotra Island off the coast of Yemen.

It was taken to Somalia and later used to hijack *Ruen*.

Govt. extends validity of FCRA registration of NGOs till June 30

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry on Thursday extended the validity of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) registration of non-government organisations (NGOs) and associations till June 30.

Registrations of many NGOs are up for renewal since September 29, 2020. The registration, mandatory to receive foreign funds, is renewed every five years.

The Ministry has extended the validity of NGOs at least nine times since 2020 as the applications could not be processed within the stipulated time frame.

On Thursday, the Ministry, in an order, said the registration certificates of entities whose validity was extended till March 31 and "whose renewal application is pending will stand extended till June 30, 2024, or till the date of disposal of renewal application, whichever is earlier".

The Ministry said all FCRA-registered associations should note that in case of refusal of the application for renewal of registration, the validity of the certificate shall be deemed to have expired on the date of refusal of the application and the association or the NGO shall not be eligible either to receive the foreign contribution or utilise the foreign contribution received.

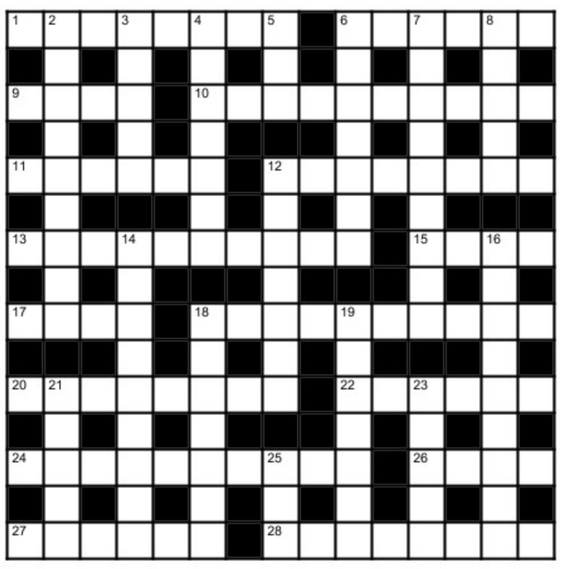
The order said that the registration of FCRA entities whose five-year validity period is expiring between April 1 and June 30 this year and the NGOs that have applied for renewal before the expiry of the registration will also stand extended till June 30 "or till the date of disposal of renewal application, whichever is earlier."

TH CROSSWORD + 14136

(set by Gussalufz)

To solve this puzzle online, get across to our crossword site. @ *https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn*

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

1 Video conference or phone displaying a cat or dog's rendering? (8)
6 Angel, he's back penning hip-hop! (6)
9 To an extent, get along with others (2,2)
10 Beverage in bar with name and class (10)
11 Baby, it's irrational with ultimately increasing rent (6)
12 Opportunities for extra tips at bar, after evicting a rowdy (3,5)
13 Husband in spicy frolicking with partner, involving body (10)
15 Supported by voucher company's left (4)
17 Bag "Best Music," ignoring the odds (4)
18 Perhaps bike to where we played around back in school? (3-7)
20 Flutter while flying north, for a change in direction (4,4)
22 Groups of molluscs preferring America to India (6)
24 Setter and date in close scare (10)
26 Fly's bite repelled (4)
27 Extremely sweet insect chutney (6)
28 Head of state quietly eliminated citizen (8)

Down

2 Show me everything post-intro, you idiot box (3,4,2)
3 Zero Lactobacillus acidophilus initially found in milk oddly containing 58.44 grams salt per kilogram, say (5)
4 Stiff resistance to biosynthesised cocaine (7)
5 Alluring party-thrower kills guests at the end (3)
6 Small-time criminal finally caught by exhausted security using charm (7)
7 Gauge again malfunctioning? A mere surge?? No good! (9)
8 TV show episode storyline captivates one (5)
12 Bear eating a bit of lunch with honey, essentially to become bigger (7)
14 Isn't Kali bubbling with energy and angelic! (9)
16 Indian spies probing vendor unfortunately in trouble with the bank (9)
18 "Also, hand joint," said tripping person (7)
19 Winslet so humbly rejected guards, accommodations (7)
21 Low interest EMI's terms ensnare poor nun (5)
23 After taking top off, cleaned and pressed (5)
25 State-owned radio broadcast (3)

SUDOKU

		6			9	2	1	5
9					4			3
			2		8			
		9						2
		2	8		6	4		
8						6		
			7		2			
3			6					4
2	5	7	9			3		

No.SS6113 Distribution: www.knightfeatures.com

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★☆☆

Solution to previous puzzle

T	Y	R	A	N	N	Y		S	M	A	S	H	E	D
	A		U		O		A		E		H		V	
F	O	O	D		O	F	T	E	N	T	I	M	E	S
	U		I		D		T		A		B		R	
U	N	C	O	I	L			E	X	C	L	U	D	E	S
	D				E		N		E		I		S	
V	E	R	B	O	S	I	T	Y		S	C	O	T	S
			E				I				H			
A	T	A	L	L		T	O	D	O	L	I	S	T	S
	E		G		M		N		P				H	
S	N	A	R	L	U	P	S		C	L	E	V	E	R
	T		A		M		P		O		N		T	
A	B	O	V	E	B	O	A	R	D		S	C	O	W
	E		I		A		N		E		U		P	
I	D	I	A	M	I	N		A	S	P	E	R	S	E

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

4	6	3	8	1	9	7	5	2
9	7	5	6	2	3	1	4	8
8	1	2	5	4	7	3	9	6
7	2	8	1	9	6	4	3	5
6	5	4	7	3	2	9	8	1
1	3	9	4	8	5	2	6	7
5	9	6	3	7	1	8	2	4
3	4	7	2	6	8	5	1	9
2	8	1	9	5	4	6	7	3

FAITH

God, the ultimate refuge

One of the 12 Azhwars, Sri Kulasekara, is suffixed with the title Perumal and called Kulasekara Perumal. His work Thirumozhi is called Perumal Thirumozhi. Sri Bharathan Swamy said in discourse that the Azhwar emphasised that God alone is the ultimate refuge.

In all verses in the Vth decad, he expressed his helplessness and said he had no other recourse for succour than Lord Narayana.

The Azhwar says:

"I have no other go if you fail to wipe out my sorrows. Even if a mother pushes her child for disobedience, he will hold her feet crying. So do I."

"I cling to you like a wife who holds on to her husband irrespective of his attitude. Like citizens expect their king to save them as their only protector, I look upon you."

"I am like a patient who still loves his surgeon for curing illness despite he piercing with sharp instruments and causing pain."

"Like all rivers confluence in the ocean, you are my final destination. Even if it does not rain, the standing crops will look upon the sky to pour and give relief. I yearn for your divine grace."

Those who recite this Vth decad will not go to hell, will not have rebirth and will derive His blessings.

INBRIEF

AstraZeneca drug gets CDSCO nod to treat two more cancers

AstraZeneca Pharma India has received nod from the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) to import for sale and distribution Trastuzumab deruxtecan lyophilized powder for concentrate for solution for infusion 100 mg (Enhertu) for treating two more cancers. The additional indications for which CDSCO has given approval are HER2-low metastatic breast cancer and HER2 positive gastric/gastro-oesophageal cancer, the company said.

RoC lets L&T Finance Holdings to be called L&T Finance Ltd.

L&T Finance Holdings Ltd. (LTFH) said it had received approval from the Registrar of Companies to change its name to L&T Finance Ltd. (LTF). The change is effective March 28. "Subsequent to the merger effective December 4, 2023, this rebranding initiative reflects our commitment towards the creation of a simplified 'single lending entity,' housing all lending businesses under one operating NBFC," Sudipta Roy, MD & CEO, LTF, said in a statement.

Afcons Infrastructure files papers for ₹7,000-cr. IPO

Afcons Infrastructure Ltd. of the Shapoorji Pallonji Group has filed a draft red herring prospectus with the market regulator, Securities and Exchange Board of India, to raise funds through an initial public offering (IPO). The offering, with a face value of ₹10 an equity share, is a mixture of fresh issue of ₹1,250 crore shares and an offer for sale of up to ₹5,750 crore by Goswami Infratech Private Ltd. according to a filing by the company.

'GeM may offer works contracts'

The procurement portal wants works contracts for construction projects to also be bid out through the platform with a transparent monitoring mechanism; procurements through the GeM platform this year rises past the ₹4 lakh crore mark

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Government e-Marketplace (GeM), an online platform for public procurement of goods and services, plans to seek the Centre's approval to enable work contracts for construction and building projects to also be bid out through the platform with a transparent monitoring mechanism to assess the progress in such contracts.

This is part of a broader reboot of the GeM platform, which is now used for everything from critical defence procurements to services like aircraft chartering and printing of election-related material, its chief executive officer P. K. Singh said on Friday.

Better practices

GeM says it wants to expedite the tendering process for public works contracts and attract contractors across India

- Currently, the tendering process for public procurement is often time-consuming and attracts only local contractors
- Total GMV of procurement via the GeM platform doubled from ₹2.01 lakh crore in 2022-23
- 'Platform now used even for defence procurement'

The planned upgrade includes a revamp of its online interface to switch to an open Application Programming Interface (API) architecture, that will allow individual departments, States, and local bodies to create customised micro-procurement portals with multi-lingual interfaces and flexibilities for local rules.

On Thursday evening, a service procurement order from the State Bank of India worth about ₹400 crore pushed the total gross merchandise value of procurements done through the GeM platform this year beyond the ₹4 lakh crore mark—double the ₹2.01 lakh crore recorded in 2022-23.

On work contracts, Mr. Singh said the tendering process is often time-consuming, starting with the need to draft Requests for Proposals that can take six months to a year, and the tendering process often attracts only local contractors and also faces delays.

If the GeM is allowed for such projects, a contractor in Kerala can bid for work in Rajasthan and the project's progress can be monitored online. Milestone-linked payments released electronically which save contractors from having to pursue officers, and post-contract management features can also be included, the GeM CEO said.

ZEE to cut Tech & Innovation Centre headcount by 50%

Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

ZEE Entertainment Enterprises Ltd. (ZEE) has decided to prune headcount at its Bengaluru-based Technology & Innovation Centre (TIC) by about 50% and streamline its work as part of a strategic board-driven push to cut costs.

"Going forward, the TIC will maintain a sharper focus on enhancing the overall content creation, distribution and monetisation process for the company by utilising technology led tools to gain deeper insights into consumer preferences," the company said in a statement on Friday.

Zee did not specify the exact number of employees who would be affected by the move at the TIC, which was inaugurated in May 2022.

Zee, which has been struggling to improve its financial performance, is locked in a legal battle with Sony after the Japanese media company's Indian unit pulled out of a proposed merger.

'Streamline costs'

Separately, competition has also intensified in the Indian television and digital media space following Reliance Industries' acquisition of Disney's Indian media assets, forcing Zee to streamline its operations and costs.

"The core and streamlined team at TIC will now only focus on enabling and empowering us in this process of content creation, distribution and monetisation," Zee's MD & CEO Punit Goenka was quoted as saying in the statement.

India must pay DT $132 mn in Devas case award: U.S. court

Ayushi Kar
MUMBAI

The U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia has confirmed a $132-million award to Deutsche Telekom against India. The German firm had petitioned the court to confirm this award even as India had countered the petition to get the award dismissed.

The award by the UN Commission on International Trade Law Arbitration had found India in violation of the bilateral investment treaty (BIT) between Germany and India. The reason cited was that it had held that the government of India had terminated a spectrum deal between state-owned Antrix and Devas in 2011. Deutsche Telekom was a shareholder in Devas.

DT had sought enforcement of the award in the U.S. India had tried to get this petition dismissed on two counts. First, that the U.S. was not the appropriate jurisdiction, that is forum non conveniens. Second, that DT did not have sufficient evidence to claim the award. The court said DT met its burden of proof.

(*The writer is with The Hindu businessline*)

Banks' GNPAs set to improve to 2.1% by FY25, says Care Ratings

Press Trust of India
MUMBAI

The gross non-performing assets (GNPA) of the Indian banking system are set to improve further to up to 2.1% by the end of FY25, according to a report.

GNPAs are likely to come at 2.5-2.7% in FY24 and will improve further to 2.1-2.4% by the end of FY25, Care Ratings said in the report.

For true picture

It can be noted the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) began the comprehensive exercise in the middle of the last decade by instructing banks to classify certain stressed assets as NPAs so that the balance sheets represent a true picture.

The rating agency also flagged a list of downside risks, which may result in its estimate not coming true, including a material weakening of asset quality due to elevated interest rates, the impact of regulatory changes, tighter liquidity environment and global issues.

Care said GNPAs surged to 11.2% in FY18 from 3.8% in FY14 due to the AQR process of 2015-16, which pushed banks to recognise NPAs and cut unnecessary restructuring and added the stress was emanating from exposure to big-ticket wholesale advances.

The asset quality has improved due to recoveries, higher write-offs by banks and much lower slippages, Care said in the report.

ZF Rane India acquires 100% stake in TRW Sun Steering

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

ZF Rane Automotive India Pvt. Ltd., a joint venture between the ZF Group in India and the Rane Group, has acquired a 100% stake in TRW Sun Steering Wheels Pvt. Ltd. (TSSW) for an undisclosed sum.

With the acquisition of the Gurugam-based domestic steering wheels and occupant safety equipment manufacturer, this joint venture is now more strongly committed to growth in the western and northern region, said the hydraulic steering gear system, seat belts and airbags manufacturer for the automobile sector in a statement.

Traders, retailers must report weekly wheat stocks: Centre

Reuters
MUMBAI

'It is aimed at managing food security and prevent hoarding and price speculation'

Traders, retailers and food processors must declare wheat stocks every Friday from April to prevent hoarding and price spikes, the govt said on Friday.

The second biggest global wheat consumer after China has been trying to contain wheat prices after heat waves hit production for two straight years, forcing the government to sell record volumes to boost domestic supplies.

India imposed a limit on wheat stock traders could hold to moderate prices. However, the limit is set to expire on March 31.

The measure is aimed to "manage overall food security and prevent hoarding and unscrupulous speculation," the Centre added in a statement.

The government is keen to replenish stocks by increasing procurement this year and to do this effectively, they must monitor private buying, said a trader, seeking anonymity.

Stock in govt warehouses dropped to 9.7 million metric tons by February end, the lowest since 2017.

Force Motors to shut down agri-tractors business

Reuters
BENGALURU

Force Motors said on Friday it will close its agricultural tractors business and related activities from March 31.

The closure of business is part of the company's product rationalisation programme under which it will focus on its core segments such as shared mobility transportation, last mile mobility and the creation of special vehicles for civil and defence applications, the company added.

During financial year 2023, the sale of agricultural tractors accounted for 3.66% of the company's total revenue, Force Motors said in a regulatory filing.

BBL to manufacture battery pack systems

N. Anand
CHENNAI

Bimetal Bearings Ltd. (BBL), in association with a Scotland based firm, has decided to manufacture and sell battery pack systems and associated technologies for the e-mobility and energy sector.

Battery maker MEP Technologies Ltd., which entered into a pact with BBL in 2021, has agreed to provide the required technology for energy storage and management solutions, manufacturing and assembling of the battery packs and other allied technologies, said the company in a regulatory filing.

The new business is expected to commence production in the last quarter of FY25 or the first quarter of FY26.

BBL is into the manufacturing of engine bearings, bushings, thrust washers, alloy powder and bimetallic strip. It reported a net revenue of ₹229 crore for FY23 against ₹197 crore in the earlier period.

Panasonic to invest ₹450 cr. in start-ups

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Panasonic Corporation's Corporate Venture Capital Fund initiative, Panasonic Kurashi Visionary Fund (PKVF), "is committed to investing ₹450 crore to support start-ups across India, Japan and Europe," said Kunio Gohara, Chief Transformation Officer (CTrO) and Head of the CVC office, Panasonic Corporation.

Mr. Kunio said PKVF was established to tackle social problems globally and aims to enrich and transform people's lives.

The fund's focus areas include well-being, decarbonization, energy, food and spatial infrastructure and emerging lifestyles.

Manish Sharma, Chairman, Panasonic Life Solutions India said, "India is the world's third largest start-up ecosystem with over 1.25 lakh start-ups and 110 unicorns and Panasonic is looking forward to being part of this journey through our initiatives."

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY G20
Tender Notice No. ECN-TRD-02-2024
Dated: 25.03.2024
The undersigned, on behalf of the President of India, invites E-tenders for the following work.

Name of Work	Appx. Value
Design, Supply, Erection, Testing & Commissioning of 25 kV, 50 Hz, Single Phase, AC Electrification including OHE & TSS of 2nd line of Bagalkot-Wandal section along with left over works required for commissioning of Bagalkot-Wandal section (COMPOSITE TENDER)	Rs. 20,30,47,231.90/-

Last date for submission of bids: Up to 11:00 hrs. of 19.04.2024
For details log on: www.ireps.gov.in
Deputy Chief Electrical Engineer/TRD Construction / Bengaluru Cantonment
PUB/779/AAV/PRB/SWR/2023-24
South Western Railway-SWR SWRRLY SWRRLY

SOUTHERN RAILWAY
Construction Organization, Ernakulam Jn
1.TENDER NOTICE No:07-CE-CN-ERS-2024-OT Dated 12/03/2024
Name of work: Earth work etc at Kumbalam yard
Tender Value: Rs. 3021.30 Lakhs
Bid Security: Rs. 1660700/-
Completion Period: 18 Months
Date and time-of tender closing : 08/04/2024.
2.TENDER NOTICE No: 08-CE-CN-ERS-2024-OT Dated 13/03/2024
Name of work: Earth work, extension of minor bridges, platforms, FOB, protective works between PASA & & NYY stations
Tender Value: Rs.5750.59 Lakhs
Bid Security: Rs. 3025300/-
Completion Period: 24 Months.
Date and time of tender closing: 08/04/2024.
Complete details and tender document will be available at **https://www.ireps.gov.in**
Chief Engineer/Construction Ernakulam Jn

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY G20
Tender Notice No. B/TRD.2023-24/20
Dated: 25.03.2024
The undersigned, on behalf of the President of India, invites E-tenders for the following work.

Name of Work	Appx. Value
[I] Provision of Automatic signalling between KSR Bengaluru-Yasvantpur-Yelahanka section [ii] Provision of Auxiliary Transformer for interlocking of LC's over Bengaluru division [iii] Provision of ATs at LC gates LC No. 119(Bangarpet-Tyakal) and 7(Oorgaum-Champion) [iv] OHE modification works due to platform extension at Nayandahalli station towards Mysuru end.	Rs. 1,15,36,696.65/-

Last date for submission of bids: Up to 15:00 hrs. of 15.04.2024
For details log on: www.ireps.gov.in
Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer/TRD Bengaluru
PUB/778/AAV/PRB/SWR/2023-24
South Western Railway-SWR SWRRLY SWRRLY

SOUTHERN RAILWAY
CENTRAL WORKSHOPS :: GOLDEN ROCK TIRUCHIRAPPALLI 620 004:: EXTRA DIVISION
E-Tender Notice No.
CW/C/192/ Grit Blasting-ICF & LHB Bogies/ 2024-26 Dt. 27.03.2024
"Grit blasting of ICF and LHB bogie components"
Value : Rs.2,39,48,000/- inclusive of GST@18%
Bid Security Amount: Rs.2,69,700/-
Tender Document Cost:Rs.10,000/-
Contract period : 24 months
Tender Closing Date & Time 18.04.2024 @ 12:00 hours
Complete details and tender documents are available at **www.ireps.gov.in**
Asst. Works Manager/Carriage Central Workshops/Ponimal

PUBLIC NOTICE
My client Sri. Noor Mohammed Rizwan, S/o. Sri. Hafiz Mohammed Shamsuddin is intending to purchase the schedule property mentioned hereunder for a valuable consideration from its owners Smt. M. Puttamma W/o. Late. T. Nagappa and her children Sri. N. Narasimhamurthy, Smt. N. Vijayalakshmi, Sri. N. Maruthi & Miss. N. Shobha Rep. by their GPA Holder M/s. Green City Constructions Private Limited, having Office at No. 1142,35th Cross, 26th 'A' Main, 4th 'T' Block, Jayanagar Bangalore- 560 041. and agreement holder B. S. Ashok.
If any persons and concerned authorities having any claims, right, title and interest whatsoever over the schedule property may forward their objections to the undersigned in writing with supporting documents of your such claims, within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice. Failing which it will be deemed that there are no claims, right, title and interest by anybody and my client will proceed for completion of sale transaction and thereafter no claims will be considered.
SCHEDULE
Residential Apartment Flat No. B-114, 1545 Sq. Ft. SBA in the 1st floor of Block-B, "GREEN CITY EUTOPIA" project with one covered Car Parking Slot in the Basement Floor with UDS 370.8 Sq. Ft. property bearing New No. 9 land bearing Sy. No. 31, Situated at Nayanappa shetty Palya Village, Begur Hobli, Bangalore South Taluk and bounded on: East by :Property of Sri. T. Narasimhaiah, West by : Property of Sri. T. Hanumanthappa, North by : Property of Sri. Krishnam Raju, South by : Property of Sri. T. Nagappa (No.32/).
MANJUNATHA & ASSOCIATES
K. N. MANJUNATHA CHARY, ROOPA. B, & B.N. JAGADISH KUMAR, Advocates, # 96, 1st Floor, 1st Main, 4th Cross, Maruthi Nagar, Madiwala, Bangalore- 68, Mob: 9845965626, 7406090832
Bangalore, Date : 29-03-2024

Form No. INC-19
NOTICE
[Pursuant to rule 22 of the Companies (Incorporation) Rules, 2014]
1. Notice is hereby given that in pursuance to Rule 22 of the Companies (Incorporation) Rule, 2014 the Company **M/s Rang De India Micro Capital Foundation** having its registered office at **# C1201, Ajmera Green Acres Bannerghata Road, Bangalore – 560076**, registered u/s 25 of the Companies Act, 1956 (Erstwhile Act), proposed to Convert the Company into normal Private limited Company.
2. The Members of the Company in the general meeting held on **22nd June 2023** decided to Convert into a private limited company, as a procedural aspect and in accordance with the provisions of Companies Act, 2013, the company has made an application to Regional Director, Southeast region for Conversion.
3. Notice is hereby given that any person, firm, company, corporation or body corporate, objecting to this application may communicate such objection to the Registrar of Companies "Karnataka" within thirty days from the date of publication of this notice, by a letter addressed to Registrar of Companies situated at **'E' Wing, 2nd Floor, Kendriya Sadana Kormangala, Banglore-560034** a copy of which shall be forwarded to in the Applicant at **C1201, Ajmera Green Acres Bannerghata Road, Bangalore - 560076.**
For **RANG DE INDIA MICRO CAPITAL FOUNDATION**
Sd/- Smita Satish Director DIN: 06492277 **Sd/- Ramakrishna Krishnamurthy Nakka Director DIN: 07204815**
Place : Bangalore **- Date:** 30.03.2024

PUBLIC NOTICE
That the public are hereby informed and cautioned that my client **Mr. Mohamed Ziauddin**, S/o of Late Mr. B. Mohamed Imam, aged about 65 years, residing at No. 875, Sunset Creek Lane, Pleasanton CA 94566, USA, Rep by his GPA Holder **Mr. Mohamed Zahiruddin**, is the absolute owners in lawful, physical and peaceful possession and enjoyment of the agricultural land bearing Sy No.21, measuring 5 Acres, situated at Yerappanahalli Village, Bidarahalli Hobli, Bangalore East Taluk, Bangalore.
I had executed an unregistered General Power of Attorney dtd.07-07-2003, in favour of **Mr. Syed Asif** S/o Late Syed Abdul Sattar R/at No.15, Queen's Road, Bangalore, presently R/at No.16, 5th Main Road, Jayamahal New Extension, Bangaluru-560046 and the same is duly rescinded/terminated/cancelled. Therefore my client notify the general public that the said unregistered General Power of Attorney dated 07-07-2003 said to have been executed by my clients in favour of the said **Mr. Syed Asif** S/o Late Syed Abdul Sattar is/are duly terminated/rescinded by issuing a Legal Notice dtd. 26-03-2024 and the General public shall not deal with anybody in respect of above said property and if anybody deals with the said person, he/she/they will be doing so at his/her/their own risk and my clients shall not be held liable or responsible for the same and the said person shall not derive any rights over said properties.
S.V. MANJUNATHA, Advocate
No.14, 13th Cross, Cubbonpet,
Opp. Kandhaya Bhavan, Bengaluru-560009.

PUBLIC NOTICE
That the public are hereby informed and cautioned that my client **Mr. Mohamed Sayeeduddin**, S/o of Late Mr. B. Mohamed Imam, aged about 62 years, residing at No. P.O. Box: 13741, Flat No.605, Al-Hala Building, Behind Big Shaik, Zayed Mosque, Dibba, Fujairah, U.A.E, Rep by his GPA Holder **Mr. Mohamed Zahiruddin**, is the absolute owners in lawful, physical and peaceful possession and enjoyment of the agricultural land bearing Sy No.21, measuring 5 Acres, situated at Yerappanahalli Village, Bidarahalli Hobli, Bangalore East Taluk, Bangalore.
I had executed an unregistered General Power of Attorney dtd.07-07-2003, in favour of **Mr. Syed Asif** S/o Late Syed Abdul Sattar R/at No.15, Queen's Road, Bangalore, presently R/at No. 16, 5th Main Road, Jayamahal New Extension, Bangaluru-560046 and the same is duly rescinded/terminated/cancelled. Therefore my client notify the general public that the said unregistered General Power of Attorney dated 07-07-2003 said to have been executed by my clients in favour of the said **Mr. Syed Asif** S/o Late Syed Abdul Sattar is/are duly terminated/rescinded by issuing a Legal Notice dtd. 26-03-2024 and the General public shall not deal with anybody in respect of above said property and if anybody deals with the said person, he/she/they will be doing so at his/her/their own risk and my clients shall not be held liable or responsible for the same and the said person shall not derive, any rights over said properties.
S.V. MANJUNATHA, Advocate
No.14, 13th Cross, Cubbonpet,
Opp. Kandhaya Bhavan, Bengaluru-560009.

PUBLIC NOTICE
That the public are hereby informed and cautioned that my client **Mr. Mohamed Ziauddin**, S/o of Late Mr. B. Mohamed Imam, aged about 65 years, residing at No. 875, Sunset Creek Lane, Pleasanton CA 94566, USA, Rep by his GPA Holder **Mr. Mohamed Zahiruddin**, is the absolute owners in lawful, physical and peaceful possession and enjoyment of the agricultural land bearing Sy No.21, measuring 5 Acres, situated at Yerappanahalli Village, Bidarahalli Hobli, Bangalore East Taluk, Bangalore.
I had executed an unregistered General Power of Attorney dtd.07-07-2003, in favour of **Mr. Syed Asif** S/o Late Syed Abdul Sattar R/at No.15, Queen's Road, Bangalore, presently R/at No.16, 5th Main Road, Jayamahal New Extension, Bangaluru-560046 and the same is duly rescinded/terminated/cancelled. Therefore my client notify the general public that the said unregistered General Power of Attorney dated 07-07-2003 said to have been executed by my clients in favour of the said **Mr. Syed Asif** S/o Late Syed Abdul Sattar is/are duly terminated/rescinded by issuing a Legal Notice dtd. 26-03-2024 and the General public shall not deal with anybody in respect of above said property and if anybody deals with the said person, he/she/they will be doing so at his/her/their own risk and my clients shall not be held liable or responsible for the same and the said person shall not derive any rights over said properties.
S.V. MANJUNATHA, Advocate
No.14, 13th Cross, Cubbonpet,
Opp. Kandhaya Bhavan, Bengaluru-560009.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Our Client is desirous of purchasing the dry agricultural property described in the Schedule written hereunder (**"THE SCHEDULE PROPERTY"**), from M/s. Prasiddhi Ventures, a partnership firm, No.9, Commerce House, Unit No.405, 4th Floor, Cunningham Road, Bengaluru – 560 052. The said Firm has represented that it has purchased a larger extent of property measuring 3 acres 34 guntas, including the Schedule Property vide Sale Deed dated 27/06/2022 from Smt. Tamizhselvi, wife of Sri Uttam Kumar Das and others as Vendors & Sri Puttaraju, son of Late Sri H. Muniswamappa and Sri Madhuraj Padma Siddharth, son of Late Sri N.C. Madhuraju as Confirming Parties. We are in the process of scrutinizing the title to the Schedule Property.
Any person/s asserting any right/s, interest, title or claim/s in respect of the Schedule Property, in any manner whatsoever or has any right/s or claim/s in respect of the Schedule Property or has any objection/s to such sale thereof in favour of our Client, is/are hereby called upon to notify the undersigned in writing, within 10 days from the date of issuance of this Public Notice, along with documentary proof thereof. If no such written objections/claims along with documentary proof is/are received by the undersigned within the aforesaid period our Client will proceed on the basis that there are no claim/s and/or objection/s whatsoever with regard to the Schedule Property and will conclude the sale transaction, without being liable for any future claim/s.
SCHEDULE
All the piece and parcel of the dry agriculture land bearing Survey No.72/28, old Survey No.72/2, measuring 36 guntas (thirty-six) guntas situated at Thigala Chowdadenahalli Village, Sarjapura-3 Hobli, Anekal Taluk, Bengaluru District and bounded as follows:
East : By Road;
West : By Survey No.72/1;
North : By Survey No.72/27; and
South : By Survey No.72/29.
M/s. Sundaraswamy & Ramdas
Advocates,
No.24, Keshava Nivas, Kalidasa Road, Gandhinagar, Bangalore – 560 009.
Ph: 22263838, 22380809, 22251764
E-mail: admin@sundaraswamy.com
Date: 29/03/2024

GAZA STRIP

Israel's Netanyahu approves talks on Gaza ceasefire, hostage release

AFP

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu approved on Friday new talks on a Gaza ceasefire, a day after the world's top court ordered Israel to ensure urgent humanitarian aid reaches people in the Palestinian territory. The new talks on Gaza ceasefire and hostage release will take place in Doha and Cairo. AFP

ISLAMABAD

Biden assures Pak. Prime Minister Shehbaz of continuous support

REUTERS

Marking the first official communication with a Pakistani Premier during his tenure, U.S. President Joe Biden has dashed off a letter to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressing continuous support and highlighted that the ties between the two nations are critical for bilateral and regional peace and security. PTI

SAN FRANCISCO

Musk's Grok-1.5 AI chatbot to be available on X starting next week

REUTERS

Elon Musk said his artificial intelligence startup xAI's latest Grok-1.5 chatbot will be available on his platform X next week. Earlier this month, Mr. Musk said xAI would open-source Grok, days after the billionaire sued Microsoft-backed OpenAI for allegedly abandoning its original mission in favour of a for-profit model. REUTERS

BEIJING

Chinese tech giant Huawei says profits more than doubled in 2023

AP

Chinese tech giant Huawei said on Friday its profits more than doubled in 2023, as it ramps up efforts to bounce back in a year that saw the company apparently defy U.S. sanctions with the release of a high-end smartphone. Huawei said it generated a profit of 87 billion yuan ($12 billion) last year. AFP

Israeli airstrikes near Syria's Aleppo kill 42: war monitor

Casualties include 36 Syrian troops and six Hezbollah fighters; dozens injured in what is the deadliest such attack in years, says Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights

Associated Press
BEIRUT

The Syrian Army says Israeli airstrikes early on Friday near the northern city of Aleppo killed or wounded "a number of" people and caused damage. An opposition war monitor said the strikes killed 42, most of them Syrian troops.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitor, said Israeli strikes hit missile depots for Lebanon's militant Hezbollah group in Aleppo's southern suburb of Jibreen, near the Aleppo International Airport, and the nearby town of Safira, home to a sprawling military facility.

Same story: Israel has carried out hundreds of strikes on targets in government-controlled parts of Syria in recent years. REUTERS

The Observatory said 36 Syrian troops and six Hezbollah fighters died, and dozens of people were wounded, calling it the deadliest such attack in years.

There was no immediate statement from Israeli officials on the strikes.

Israel, which has vowed to stop Iranian entrenchment in its northern neighbor, has carried out hundreds of strikes on targets in government-controlled parts of Syria in recent years, but it rarely acknowledges them.

On Thursday, Syrian state media reported airstrikes near the capital, Damascus, saying they wounded two civilians.

Hezbollah has had an armed presence in Syria since it joined the country's conflict fighting alongside government forces.

The strikes have escalated over the past five months against the backdrop of the war in Gaza and ongoing clashes between Hezbollah and Israeli forces on the Lebanon-Israel border.

Russia strikes Kyiv's energy infra with drones, missiles

Associated Press
KYIV

Moscow launched a large-scale attack on Ukraine's energy infrastructure on Friday, with a mass barrage of 99 drones and missiles hitting regions across the country, Ukraine's armed forces said.

Air raid warnings rang out across the country, with 10 Ukrainian regions coming under fire, the country's Interior Minister, Ihor Klymenko, said.

Ukraine's state-owned grid operator, Ukrenergo, said that Friday's attack deliberately targeted thermal and hydroelectric power plants across central and western regions. DTEK, Ukraine's largest private electricity operator, also said that three of its thermal power plants had been damaged in the attack. It announced emergency power shutdowns in the city of Odesa.

Counter strike: Ukrainian troops from anti-drone mobile air defence unit at their position in Chernihiv on Thursday. REUTERS

Escalating strikes

Russia has escalated its attacks on Ukraine in recent days, launching several missile barrages on the capital, Kyiv, and hitting energy infrastructure across the country. Large-scale blackouts have already affected Ukraine's Kharkiv, where 7,00,000 people lost power in an attack on March 22.

Five people, including a 5-year-old girl, were wounded during the attack in Ukraine's Dnipropetrovsk region. He later said that another man had been killed and one more injured in a separate drone attack on Friday.

Moscow to begin spring draft of conscripts

Agence France-Presse
MOSCOW

Russia will begin calling up tens of thousands of soldiers next week in a conscription drive to replenish its armed forces and build up its military reserves.

Moscow says conscripts are not sent to fight in Ukraine but the draft – which happens twice a year – comes amid persistent rumours of a new wave of mobilisation for the Ukraine offensive.

"The spring draft will be held from April 1," a senior Russian official said.

Some 1,47,000 conscripts were drafted during last year's spring call-ups. Russian men aged between 18 and 30 are eligible to be called up after lawmakers increased the upper age limit from 27 last year.

Nine held in Tajikistan for Russia concert hall attack

Associated Press
MOSCOW

Nine persons have been detained by Tajikistan over suspected contact with the perpetrators of last week's attack by gunmen on a suburban Moscow concert hall that killed 144 people, Russian state news agency RIA Novosti said on Friday.

Those detained are also suspected of having connections with the Islamic State group.

Russia's Investigative Committee said on Thursday it had detained another suspect in relation to the raid on Crocus City Hall, on suspicion of being involved in financing the attack. It did not give further details of the suspect.

Following UN veto, Russia says big powers need to stop 'strangling' North Korea

Reuters
MOSCOW

Russia had vetoed the annual renewal of sanctions against North Korea over its nuclear programmes

Russia said on Friday that major powers needed a new approach to North Korea, accusing the U.S. and its allies of ratcheting up military tensions in Asia and seeking to "strangle" the reclusive state.

Russia vetoed the annual renewal of a panel of experts monitoring enforcement of longstanding United Nations sanctions against North Korea over its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes.

Moscow's move, which strikes a blow at the enforcement of a myriad of UN sanctions imposed after Pyongyang carried out its first nuclear test in 2006, underscores the dividend that Kim Jong-un has earned by moving closer to President Vladimir Putin amid the war in Ukraine.

'Old templates'

"It is obvious to us that the UN Security Council can no longer use old templates in relation to the problems of the Korean Peninsula," Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said.

Ms. Zakharova said the U.S. was stoking military tensions, that international restrictions had not improved the security situation and that there were severe humanitarian consequences for the population of North Korea, formally known as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

The U.S. State Department said on Thursday that Russia's veto had "cynically undermined international peace and security" and accused Moscow of seeking to bury reporting by the panel of experts on its own "collusion" with North Korea to get weapons.

5 dead, over 100 hospitalised after taking health supplement in Japan

Associated Press
TOKYO

Five persons who took a Japanese health supplement have died and more than 100 have been hospitalised as of Friday, a week after a pharmaceutical company issued a recall of the products, officials said.

Osaka-based Kobayashi Pharmaceutical Co. came under fire for not going public quickly with problems known internally as early as January. The first public announcement came only on March 22.

People are undergoing treatment in hospitals after taking products – including Benikoji Choleste Help meant to lower cholesterol – that contain an ingredient called benikoji, a red species of mold.

Tough spot: Akihiro Kobayashi of Kobayashi Pharmaceutical Co. arrives at a news conference in Osaka in Japan on Friday. AP

Some people developed kidney problems after taking the supplements, but the exact cause was still under investigation.

"We apologise deeply," President Akihiro Kobayashi told reporters on Friday, bowing for a long time to emphasise the apology alongside three other top company officials.

The company's products have been recalled – as have dozens of other products that contain benikoji, including miso paste, crackers and a vinegar dressing. Japan's Health Ministry put up a list on its official site of all the recalled products, including some that use benikoji for food colouring. The Ministry warned the deaths could keep growing.

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SOARING HIGHER

Kohli climbs to fourth spot in the six-hitters' list in IPL

K. BHAGYA PRAKASH

Virat Kohli's four sixes in the game against Kolkata Knight Riders in Bengaluru on Friday took him past M.S. Dhoni's tally of 239. With 241 maximums to his credit, the Royal Challengers batter is fourth in the all-time list behind Chris Gayle (357), Rohit Sharma (261) and A.B. de Villiers (251).

AFTER EFFECT

Nortje will take time to get better after injury layoff, says Hopes

ANI

Delhi Capitals bowling coach James Hopes feels that pace spearhead Anrich Nortje will get better with time, having recently made a comeback to competitive cricket after six months. Nortje was taken to the cleaners by Rajasthan Royals' Riyan Parag at the death as he went for 48 in his four overs on Thursday night.

PINPOINT ACCURACY

All the balls landed in the same area, wide yorkers: Avesh

SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

After giving just four in the final over and helping Rajasthan Royals pip Delhi Capitals and post its second straight win, Avesh Khan said it was his best in such a situation, execution-wise. "All the balls landed in the same area, wide yorkers," said the seamer, who had started the last over with Capitals needing 17.

FOCUS

Block it out, it's all irrelevant: Smith on Hardik facing boos

K.R. DEEPAK

Steve Smith advised Hardik Pandya to simply "block out" the jeers and boos the new Mumbai Indians skipper is receiving from spectators at the IPL so far, as they are "all irrelevant". "I'd try and just say, to block it out," Smith, who has faced abuse from fans across the world. "No one outside knows what you are going through."

Blazing Narine leads the chase as KKR makes short work of RCB

Venkatesh follows suit with top score of 50 and with Salt and Shreyas chipping in, Knight Riders records a seven-wicket win with 19 balls to spare; Kohli carries his bat for a 59-ball 83 to take Royal Challengers to 182 for six which proves inadequate

On the rampage: Narine wielded the willow with abandon while Venkatesh sustained the momentum. K. BHAGYA PRAKASH

SCOREBOARD

ROYAL CHALLENGERS

Virat Kohli (not out) 83 *(59b, 4x4, 4x6)*, Faf du Plessis c Starc b Rana 8 *(6b, 1x6)*, Cameron Green b Russell 33 *(21b, 4x4, 2x6)*, Glenn Maxwell c Rinku b Narine 28 *(19b, 3x4, 1x6)*, Rajat Patidar c Rinku b Russell 3 *(4b)*, Anuj Rawat c Salt b Rana 3 *(3b)*, Dinesh Karthik run out 20 *(8b, 3x6)*; Extras (b-1, w-3): 4; Total (for six wkts. in 20 overs): 182.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-17 (du Plessis, 1.6 overs), 2-82 (Green, 8.6), 3-124 (Maxwell, 14.1), 4-144 (Patidar, 16.3), 5-151 (Rawat, 17.3), 6-182 (Karthik, 19.6).

KNIGHT RIDERS BOWLING

Starc 4-0-47-0, Rana 4-0-39-2, Anukul 2-0-6-0, Narine 4-0-40-1, Russell 4-0-29-2, Varun 2-0-20-0.

KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS

Phil Salt c Green b Vyshak 30 *(20b, 2x4, 2x6)*, Sunil Narine b Dagar 47 *(22b, 2x4, 5x6)*, Venkatesh Iyer c Kohli b Dayal 50 *(30b, 3x4, 4x6)*, Shreyas Iyer (not out) 39 *(24b, 2x4, 2x6)*, Rinku Singh (not out) 5 *(5b)*; Extras (lb-7, w-8): 15; Total (for three wkts. in 16.5 overs): 186.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-86 (Narine, 6.3), 2-92 (Salt, 7.5), 3-167 (Venkatesh, 15.1).

RCB BOWLING

Siraj 3-0-46-0, Dayal 4-0-46-1, Joseph 2-0-34-0, Dagar 2.5-0-23-1, Vyshak (**Impact Player in place of Karthik**) 4-0-23-1, Green 1-0-7-0.

Toss: KKR; **PoM:** Narine.

KKR won by seven wickets with 19 balls to spare.

Next assignment

RCB: April 2 vs **LSG**
Bengaluru, 7.30 p.m.

KKR: April 3 vs **DC**
Visakhapatnam, 7.30 p.m.

IPL-17

Ashwin Achal
BENGALURU

Just six overs into the chase, the writing was on the wall. Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) had established utter dominance, while Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) had nowhere to turn.

While RCB gently tiptoed to 182 for six, KKR sprinted to the finish line in their IPL encounter here on Friday. KKR's all-out attacking intent was made clear by openers Phil Salt (30, 20b, 2x4, 2x6) and Sunil Narine (47, 22b, 2x4, 5x6), who smashed fearsome blows to rack up 85 runs in the first six overs.

With the required run rate now down to seven an over, Venkatesh Iyer (50, 30b, 3x4, 4x6) and Shreyas Iyer (39 n.o., 24b, 2x4, 2x6) faced no pressure. The middle-order duo settled in, picked on the loose deliveries, and helped KKR reach home with 3.1 overs to spare.

Save for a wicket for local lad V. Vyshak, the 34,000-odd spectators had little to cheer about in the KKR essay.

Earlier, Virat Kohli (83 n.o., 59b, 4x4, 4x6) carried his bat for RCB, even if he was not in full flow. Kohli and his partners struggled when the pace was taken off by the KKR bowlers.

Cameron Green (33, 21b, 4x4, 2x6) and Glenn Maxwell (28, 19b, 3x4, 1x6) kept Kohli company in uninspiring partnerships.

For the third successive outing, Dinesh Karthik came to the rescue in the death overs. Karthik walked in to bat in the 18th over, and provided late momentum with an eight-ball 20.

A shoddy fielding display let RCB off the hook. The worrying trend was set when Ramandeep Singh fluffed a run out chance early in the essay to hand Green a life.

It got worse for Ramandeep, when he put down a skier at deep mid-wicket when Glenn Maxwell was on 11.

KKR was further embarrassed when Narine fluffed a sitter a short while later to give Maxwell another reprieve.

In the 17th over, the virus spread to Varun Chakravarthy, who failed to hold on to a low catch offered by Anuj Rawat.

The KKR opening blitz, however, made up for these failings.

LSG looks for home charm against PBKS to chalk up its first victory of season

Ready for challenge: LSG skipper Rahul will be keen to improve his strike rate after a middling fifty in the first game while PBKS' Arshdeep will be raring to make an impression. SANDEEP SAXENA

P.K. Ajith Kumar
LUCKNOW

Lucknow Super Giants is back on familiar turf. It should be hoping to get back into form as it takes on Punjab Kings in its first home match of the 17th edition of the IPL.

After the defeat to Rajasthan Royals last Sunday, LSG would want the season's overwhelming trend to continue: every team had won its first match at home till Thursday.

For Punjab Kings, this is the third game: it won the first and then lost the second.

Though it is very much the early days yet, no team would want to register two losses on the trot. So, much is at stake at the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Stadium on Saturday.

LSG, which qualified for the playoffs in both the editions it took part in, would be keen to put up a good show in front of its fans. For that, more of the 11 – or 12, at times – need to contribute.

Captain K.L. Rahul and Nicholas Pooran showed form against Royals, but the likes of Quinton de Kock and Devdutt Padikkal have to remain at the wicket longer. Bowlers like Ravi Bishnoi and Mohsin Khan have to be sharper, as well.

As for Kings, they need to put behind them the terrible finish to their match against Royal Challengers Bengaluru.

They would be hoping for Jonny Bairstow to regain his touch at the top of the order, where skipper Shikhar Dhawan and Prabhsimran Singh also have to deliver.

Kagiso Rabada and Harpreet Brar may not mind more support in the bowling department.

Today's match

LUCKNOW SUPER GIANTS vs PUNJAB KINGS

Lucknow, 7.30 P.M.

HEAD-TO-HEAD

Played: 3

LSG 2 | PBKS 1

PREVIOUS MEETING

LSG won by 56 runs, 2023

LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1 (SD & HD) & JIO CINEMA

Hope to make Lucknow a dominant place for LSG this summer: Langer

P.K. Ajith Kumar
LUCKNOW

Justin Langer is enjoying his maiden stint at the IPL.

"There is nothing I haven't liked about the IPL so far," the Lucknow Super Giants coach said at a press conference here on Saturday. "India has been very hospitable. And Holi, the festival of colours the other day... I haven't had so much fun since I was about three years old."

Looking back at his team's disappointing start to the campaign (the 20-run defeat to Rajasthan Royals), the former Australian opener and coach said he was glad the first game was out of the way. "Now we are looking forward to our first home game and hoping to make it a dominant place for LSG this summer," he said. "And I found that every game is won by the home side this IPL (till Thursday)."

Langer isn't bothered about the talk about the LSG captain K.L. Rahul's strike-rate. "I am not going to lose one second's sleep over Rahul," he said. "He is a beautiful player."

Punjab Kings' spin-bowling coach Sunil Joshi said he would advise his players about the pitch, which he is familiar with as Uttar Pradesh coach. "I will tell the bowlers where there are good pockets to bowl on," he said.

Meet and greet: LSG bowling coach Morne Morkel and PBKS skipper Dhawan on the eve of the match. SANDEEP SAXENA

It was a match-changing innings from Riyan, says Avesh

P.K. Ajith Kumar
LUCKNOW

Avesh Khan may have bowled an exceptional final over for Rajasthan Royals, but he acknowledged his teammate Riyan Parag's remarkable innings that helped him defend a competitive total against Delhi Capitals.

Royals' top-order had failed, as Jos Buttler, Yashasvi Jaiswal and skipper Sanju Samson were all back in the dugout within the eighth over. At 37 for three, the scoreboard didn't make happy reading for the local fans at the Sawai Mansingh Stadium in Jaipur on Thursday. But, Parag, who has been promoted to the crucial No. 4 slot this season, played a brilliant knock – 84 not out off 45 balls – to power RR to 185 for five. The host won by 12 runs, with Avesh giving away only four runs in the final over. "It was a match-changing innings from Riyan, as we had lost wickets early and the run-rate was less than six," the seamer said. "He batted fabulously and helped us post a fighting total. He is in good touch and he did well in the last game, too."

Stepping up: Avesh delivered a remarkable final over to deny Capitals. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Avesh said Parag batted sensibly. "It was because of the 25 runs he took off the last over that I got the opportunity to defend the total," said Avesh.

"I have done something similar in the past too. It is not the first time I have bowled the last over and defended runs. Last year, I defended 15 against Rajasthan. When I played for Delhi too, I bowled the last over."

INBRIEF

Bopanna and Ebden march into Miami Masters final

Top seeds Rohan Bopanna and Matthew Ebden outplayed fourth seeds Marcel Granollers and Horacio Zeballos 6-1, 6-4 in the doubles semifinals of the $10,404,205 ATP Masters tennis in Miami. The Indo-Aussie pair will play second seeds Ivan Dodig and Austin Krajicek in the final.

Other results: €148,625 Challenger, Naples: Doubles: Pre-quarterfinals: Arjun Kadhe & Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan bt Nikola Cacic & Denys Molchanov 6-4, 7-6(5).
$82,000 Challenger, San Luis Potosi, Mexico: Doubles: Quarterfinals: Rithvik Bollipalli & Niki Poonacha bt Hans Hach Verdugo & Vasek Pospisil 7-6(5), 4-6, [13-11].
$40,000 ITF women, Kofu, Japan: Doubles: Semifinals: Rutuja Bhosale & Ankita Raina bt Madeleine Brooks & Eudice Wong Chong 7-6(7), 6-3.

Indian boys in WJT Asia-Oceania under-14 final

Indian boys beat Korea 2-0 in the semifinals to set up a title clash against Japan in the World Junior Tennis (WJT) Asia-Oceania under-14 tournament in Kuching, Malaysia, on Friday. The team had placed second in the group during the league phase, as it lost to Japan 0-2, after beating China and Singapore.

The results: Semifinals: India bt Korea 2-0 (Tavish Pahwa bt Jang Junseo 6-4, 6-3; Hruthik Katakam bt Kim Dongjae 6-7(4), 5-3 (retired)).

Quarterfinals: India bt Australia 2-0 (Tavish bt Lucas Han 6-4, 6-4; Hruthik bt Taiki Taikizawa 6-4, 6-0).

LIVE TELECAST

NBA: Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema, 7.30 a.m.
Bangladesh vs Sri Lanka: 2nd Test, day 1, FanCode, 9.30 a.m.
ISL: Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema, 5 & 7.30 p.m.
Premier League: SS Select 1, 2 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 6, 8.30, 11 p.m. & 1.30 a.m. (Sunday)
LaLiga: Jio Cinema, 6.30, 8.45 p.m.; Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema, 11 p.m. & 1.30 a.m. (Sunday)
Serie A: Jio Cinema, 7.30 & 10.30 p.m.;Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema, 1.15 a.m. (Sunday)
IPL: Star Sports 1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema, 7.30 p.m.
Bundesliga: Sony Sports Ten 2, 5 (SD & HD) & LIV, 8 & 11 p.m.
NBA: Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema App, 5.30 a.m. onwards (Sunday)

Thrown in at the deep end, Ravindra has quickly found his feet for CSK

The opener set the innings up in the first two matches, at a brisk strike rate of more than 200 with some eye-catching strokeplay

IPL-17

S. Dipak Ragav
CHENNAI

When Chennai Super Kings got Rachin Ravindra for ₹1.8 crore last year, even the team management members at the auction table were surprised at how easily they got him.

The New Zealand all-rounder wasn't expected to be in the starting XI, but an injury to compatriot Devon Conway meant he was thrown into the deep end immediately, and the 24-year-old has quickly delivered for the Super Kings. The opener set the innings up in the first two matches, at a brisk strike rate of more than 200 with eye-catching strokeplay.

"I guess the whole thing about being an opener is that you try to put a bit of pressure on the bowler in the PowerPlay when it stops swinging, and I have been able to do that for two games," said Ravindra during a media interaction.

What was more impressive about his performance was that he came into the IPL after playing Tests against Australia back home and quickly found his feet.

"It was just about trying to do what I do well in terms of training and being specific about it," said Ravindra about his preparations.

"I adjust slightly between formats in terms of my intent, whereas my positions and the balls I am trying to access are quite similar."

Though he started his career as a lower-order bat, the left-hander's graph rose during the ODI World Cup last year, where he scored 578 runs when he was promoted up the order.

When asked if being an opener has unlocked his potential, Ravindra said, "Yes and no. I think it's just a lot more comfortable being at the top. But I guess during the World Cup, you get an opportunity where you play your shots, and you are like, this is maybe a part of my game.

"I took a lot of confidence from that and was able to execute some shots that I had been training but hadn't used in a game before. So yeah, I guess, a bit of that, but I think it's more about getting time in the middle and the confidence to do that on the big stages."

Striking hard: Ravindra says it is all about putting pressure on the bowler in the PowerPlay. S.R. RAGHUNATHAN

Anuja's ton gives West Zone upper hand against Central

WOMEN'S INTER-ZONAL

Press Trust of India
PUNE

Former India all-rounder Anuja Patil hit an attacking 122 (120b, 20x4, 1x6) as West Zone took a 111-run first-innings lead against Central Zone on the second day of the Women's Inter-Zonal Multi-Day Cup here on Friday.

Anuja was well supported by Jemimah Rodriguez (69 of 97 balls) as the pair added 155 runs for the fifth wicket to help West end its first innings at 356. At stumps, Central was 68 for no loss in its second innings.

Devika Vaidya looked good in the top order, scoring an aggressive 52 off 58 balls while skipper Smriti Mandhana, batting at number 8, contributed a stylish 50 (52b). Central's leg-spinner Poonam Raut got seven for 116 in 25 overs.

In another match, East declared its first innings on the overnight score of 385 for eight and then dismissed North East for 108 in its first essay with off-spinner Deepti Sharma returning figures of five for 9.

After being asked to follow-on, NE ended the second day at 156 for eight, still needing 121 runs to avoid an innings defeat.

The scores: Central 245 & 68 for no loss in 26.4 overs vs. West 356 in 76.2 overs (Anuja 122, Jemimah 69, Devika 52, Smriti 50, Poonam 7/116).

East 385/8 vs. North East 108 in 34.3 overs (Prodhan 40, Deepti 5/9) & 156/8 in 72 overs (Debasmita 30, Ayu 32 batting).

Bangladesh banks on Shakib to lift the side against Sri Lanka

CRICKET

Agence France-Presse
CHITTAGONG

Bangladesh was counting on the return of veteran all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan for a much-needed energy lift ahead of the second and final Test against Sri Lanka, stand-in coach Nic Pothas said Friday.

Sri Lanka thrashed Bangladesh by 328 runs in the first match of the series, with the hosts failing to post 200 in either innings.

Shakib is returning to the Test squad for the Chittagong match starting on Saturday after more than a year's absence, and after being elected to the Bangladeshi parliament in January.

"I think any team that has Shakib in it is very fortunate. We welcome him back," Pothas told reporters.

"It is always great to have him in the change room. His energy is very infectious," he said.

Pothas also defended Bangladesh's under-fire batters, saying the team was in the middle of a generational change.

"We have a very young and inexperienced group. There was a very elite group before this. Now we have to build," he said.

Sri Lanka captain Dhananjaya de Silva said he expected his side's top-order batters to come good after failing to shine in the first Test.

"They had been performing well in the last few matches. I have no doubt that they will definitely perform in this match," he said.

Leader Arsenal faces a tough ask at Manchester City

PREMIER LEAGUE

Agence France-Presse
LONDON

Arsenal travels to Manchester City on Sunday seeking to complete a rare double over Pep Guardiola's men in a match that could prove decisive in the three-way Premier League title race.

Liverpool can move three points clear of current leader Arsenal and four ahead of City if it beats Brighton at Anfield earlier in the day.

Arteta's men look a more battle-hardened force than last year, when they stumbled at the end of the season, opening the door for City to cruise past to a third straight title.

Repeating the feat at the Etihad is a different order of magnitude. City are unbeaten in their last 38 home games in all competitions. Brentford was the last visiting team to leave with a win and that was in November 2022.

If Arsenal does manage to complete the first league double over City since 2007/08, it could be the boost it needs to get them over the line.

Liverpool's exit from the FA Cup at the hands of Manchester United ended its push for a trophy quadruple in Jurgen Klopp's final season at Anfield.

The German manager, who has kept his team on track despite a deep injury crisis, brushed off any idea of a negative psychological impact after the 4-3 defeat at Old Trafford.

"In general, the team is in an outstanding situation in the moment," he said. "That we got through all of these different, difficult situations is absolutely exceptional."

Liverpool trails leader Arsenal on goal difference and will hope the Gunners and City cancel each other out in Manchester.

Brighton has drawn its past two matches at Anfield but has not won consecutive league games since September and Liverpool will be confident it has the firepower to win as their injury crisis eases.

Sindhu bows out; Sikki-Sumeeth duo enters the last four

SPAIN MASTERS

Press Trust of India
MADRID

P.V. Sindhu fought her heart out before going down narrowly to Thailand's Supanida Katethong in the women's singles quarterfinals of the Madrid Spain Masters Super 300 badminton tournament here on Friday.

Sindhu, who had finished runner-up in 2023, recovered from an early 4-8 deficit and saved multiple game points to grab the opening game, but couldn't go the distance as the sixth seeded Thai registered a 24-26, 21-17, 22-20 win after a see-saw battle.

However, the husband-wife combo of N. Sikki Reddy and B. Sumeeth Reddy had a lot to cheer about as they notched up a 14-21, 21-11, 21-17 win over Indonesia's fourth seed Rehan Naufal Kusharjanto and Lisa Ayu Kusumawati to enter the mixed doubles semifinals.

The women's doubles pair of Tanisha Crasto and Ashwini Ponnappa, seeded third, lost 13-21, 19-21 to sixth-seeded Taiwanese Lee Chia Hsin and Teng Chun Hsun in the quarterfinals.

The results (quarterfinals): Women: Supanida Katethong (Tha) bt P.V. Sindhu 24-26, 21-17, 22-20.
Doubles: Lee Chia Hsin & Teng Chun Hsun (Tpe) bt Tanisha Crasto & Ashwini Ponnappa 21-13, 21-19.
Mixed doubles: N. Sikki Reddy & B. Sumeeth Reddy bt Rehan Naufal Kusharjanto & Lisa Ayu Kusumawati 14-21, 21-11, 21-17.

Ahlawat stays in the hunt; Nakajima opens two-shot lead

INDIAN OPEN

Rakesh Rao
GURUGRAM

Veer Ahlawat, one of the longest hitters on the domestic tour and often leads the 'eagle-count' for the season, moved within five strokes of leader on the second day of the $2.25 million Hero Indian Open at the DLF Golf and Country Club here.

The day produced a course record of 10-under 62 from Norway's Espen Kofstad – after a highly forgettable 81 on the first day – that erased the previous best of 64 by Shubhankar Sharma in 2018 edition of this premier event and by Arjun Puri in the Kapil Dev-Grand Thornton Invitational in 2022.

When play was suspended due to lightning, 46 golfers - including Shubhankar and Anirban Lahiri - were on course. The incomplete second round also meant that the projected 'cut' at 144 could not be applied.

Extends stay

For the record, Japanese Keita Nakajima extended his stay at the top following a successive seven-under 65 for a two-round tally of 130.

He led Frenchman Romain Langasque by two shots and moved three strokes ahead of fellow overnight leader, Italian Matteo Manassero.

Ahlawat started from the 10th hole and found pars on the first seven holes. This was followed by three successive birdies before he erred in judgement and dropped a shot on the second hole of the course.

He responded with an 'eagle' on the fourth after his superb approach shot left him 10 feet from the pin. He collected two more birdies to improve his card from a first-day 69 to come up with a 66.

Nakajima's measured putting earned him five birdies in-a-row on the front nine and placed him way ahead of the pack at -12. He added back-to-back birdies after taking the turn to move to -14 with seven holes to play. After two pars, the Japanese encountered an unforeseen trouble with his putting as he bogeyed thrice in succession to slip to -11 with two holes to go.

Again, on the testing 17th, Nakajima produced a stunning drive, a well-calculated shot from the fairway and birdied to get back the confidence. But his best came on the final hole. On the par-5, Nakajima reached the green on two and drained an 'eagle-putt' from about 20 feet to finish at -14.

Going strong: Ahlawat improve his card from a first-day 69 to come up with a 66. GETTY IMAGES

Leading scores: 130: Keita Nakajima (Jpn) (65, 65); **132:** Romain Langasque (Fra) (66, 66); **133:** Matteo Manassero (Ita) (65, 68); **135:** Veer Ahlawat (69, 66); **137:** Joel Girrbach (Swi) (67, 70); Fabrizio Zanotti (Par) (67, 70) and Jeff Winther (Den) (69, 68).

Other Indians (with sub-par scores after completing their rounds): 138: Karandeep Kochhar (68, 70); Manu Gandas (73, 65); **139:** Gaganjeet Bhullar (70, 69); **140:** Rashid Khan (71, 69); **142:** Jairaj Singh Sandhu (72, 70).

BENGALURU ROUND UP

Easy win for Sporting Club

Sporting Club Bengaluru comfortably beat United Sports Club 3-1 in an I-League 2 match at the Bangalore Football Stadium here on Friday.

Sporting dominated the game from start to finish and was only stopped from winning by a bigger margin by the United goalkeeper who made impressive saves.

Sporting opened the scoring in the 28th minute with Shanid Valan finding the back of the net. Arif Shaikh doubled the advantage after half-time. Thomyo Shimray then scored a brilliant direct free kick to put his side ahead 3-0.

United got a goal back in the 82nd minute, completely against the run of play, and by then it was too late.

The win kept Sporting second in the table with 18 points from eight matches. FC Bengaluru United continues to lead the table on 19 points, with its latest victory a 2-0 win over Kenkre FC away on Friday.

The result: Sporting Club Bangalore 3 (Shanid Valan 28, Arif Shaikh 46, Thomyo Shimray 79) bt United Sports Club 1 (Sayan Das 82); FC Bengaluru United 2 (Jerry Pulamte 6, Yash Mhatre 21).

Mysore Vijaynagar blanks DB United

Mysore Vijayanagar FC defeated DB United 3-0 in the KSFA C-division league championship here on Friday.

The results: BM FC 3 (R. Kiran 26, Rohith 12, Denies Victa 30) bt Subodhya FC 0; Rush FC 2 (Akash 33, Vishruth 42) bt Noel Wilson FC 1 (Rayan 25); United Aces 1 (Thokchom 53) bt Technico FF 0; Mysore Vijayanagar FA 3 (Shishir 47, Shaun 55, Gaurav 59) bt DB United 0.

Kush Maini gets sponsorship backing from TVS Racing

Sports Bureau
CHENNAI

TVS Racing announced a sponsorship deal with Indian racer Kush Maini, who is competing in the FIA Formula 2 championship on Friday.

Kush, who is part of the Alpine F1 team's junior driver programme, is currently fifth in the F2 standings, which is the feeder series to Formula One.

"It's an honour to be supported by TVS.

"It makes me proud to see the TVS colours on my car and suit in an elite championship like Formula 2," said Kush.